

# 1 Corinthians 11:3 and the Role Of Women in the Church

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## I. Introduction

- A. I have spent the last number of weeks looking through books and articles, both in hard copy and on the web, researching the subject of the missional church. One quickly finds that it is not easy to define what people mean by the term *missional church* or *missional church movement*.<sup>1</sup> The term *missional* itself was apparently first introduced in 1998, in a book edited by Darrell Guder, entitled *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*.<sup>2</sup> This book is generally looked upon as the fountainhead that has spurred the missional discussion and a raft of literature in the last ten years.
- B. We are told that the historical beginnings of the movement, however, are somewhat earlier, generally traced in particular to the writings of missiologist Lesslie Newbigin. However the seeds of missional thought are far earlier.<sup>3</sup> Newbigin returned home to England in 1974 after spending almost 40 years as a missionary in India, only to find that his home country was also now a mission field. Though not original with him, Newbigin stressed the idea of *missio Dei*, “the mission of God,” meaning that God is at work in the world, and it is up to us to join him in his work. *Missional* is sometimes described as more of an attitude or posture.<sup>4</sup> According to MacIlvaine, “A missional church is a unified body of believers, intent on being God’s missionary presence to the indigenous community that surrounds them, recognizing that God is already at work.”<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, we are told: it is not that the church has a mission but that the mission has a church.<sup>6</sup>
- C. The missional movement originated on the left side of the theological perspective, shaped by men like Karl Barth.<sup>7</sup> People like Newbigin and the authors behind the previous

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<sup>1</sup>See the helpful introduction by Jonathan Leeman, “What in the World Is the Missional Church?” *9Marks eJournal*, October 2006, accessed September 13, 2010, <http://www.9marks.org/ejournal/what-world-missional-church>.

<sup>2</sup>Darrell L. Guder, ed. *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998). See especially Alan J. Roxburgh and M. Scott Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), p. 30.

<sup>3</sup>See e.g., W. Rodman MacIlvaine III, “What is the Missional Church Movement?” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 167 (January–March) 2010: 92–98.

<sup>4</sup>Ed Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), p. 2.

<sup>5</sup>MacIlvaine III, “What is the Missional Church Movement?” p. 91.

<sup>6</sup>Alan Hirsch, “Defining Missional,” *Leadership*, Fall 2008, p. 22.

<sup>7</sup>MacIlvaine III, “What is the Missional Church Movement?” p. 95.

mentioned *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* are not what one would call evangelical, yet missional thinking has quickly moved into the evangelical mainstream. The missional church movement is closely aligned with the emerging church movement.<sup>8</sup> Dan Kimball, a recognized authority on the emerging church has said: “To my best understanding the emerging church and the missional church are very much the same.”<sup>9</sup> Not everyone agrees on that point,<sup>10</sup> yet it is true that people like Mark Driscoll and Brian McLaren clearly move in both camps. In actuality, the missional and emerging church movements have different origins, with different founding leaders, though they share many of the same concerns.<sup>11</sup> Today it would be difficult to find an emerging church leader who does not use missional language.

D. The missional movement today takes its leaders from across the theological spectrum, from the more conservative evangelicals like Ed Stetzer<sup>12</sup> and Tim Keller<sup>13</sup> all the way to its liberal pioneers like Darrell Guder.<sup>14</sup> In general, groups associated with the missional church movement tend to be to the left of the theological spectrum. For instance, about twenty years ago when so-called moderates and conservatives were vying for control of the Southern Baptist Convention, and it became clear that the conservatives were going to win, a large number of these “moderates” left to form the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. According to their website, the Fellowship is “committed to the perspective and posture of the Missional Church.”<sup>15</sup> One of the founding principles of the Fellowship and a major reason for their split with the SBC is the issue of women in the ministry of the church.

E. The founding document of Cooperative Baptist Fellowship has this statement about women:

The New Testament gives two signals about the role of women. A literal interpretation of Paul can build a case for making women submissive to men in the Church. But another body of scripture points toward another place for women. In Gal 3:27-28 Paul wrote, “As many of you as are baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave

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<sup>8</sup>For simplicity sake I am here equating *emerging* with *emergent* as per D. A. Carson (*Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005], p. 12). The terms are, however, commonly differentiated. See Justin Taylor, “An Emerging Church Primer,” *9Marks eJournal*, September 2006, accessed September 13, 2010, <http://www.9marks.org/ejournal/emerging-church-primer>.

<sup>9</sup>Url Scaramanga, “Emerging + Missional = Emergissional.” September 6, 2007, accessed September 13, 2010, [http://www.outofur.com/archives/2007/09/emerging\\_missio.html](http://www.outofur.com/archives/2007/09/emerging_missio.html).

<sup>10</sup>Hirsch, for example, says “*missional* is not synonymous with *emerging*” (“Defining Missional,” p. 22).

<sup>11</sup>Jim Thomas, “The Missional Church,” accessed September 13, 2010, <http://www.urbana.org/articles/the-missional-church>

<sup>12</sup>Stetzer is president of LifeWay Research and LifeWay’s missiologist in residence. LifeWay is owned and operated by the Southern Baptist Convention.

<sup>13</sup>“The Missional Church,” accessed September 13, 2010, <http://www.redeemer2.com/resources/papers/missional.pdf>. Keller is the well-known pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City. See this helpful video from Desiring God, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zFFISb-Zsc8>.

<sup>14</sup>Guder is currently the Henry Winters Luce Professor of Missional and Ecumenical Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary.

<sup>15</sup>Accessed September 13, 2010, <http://www.thefellowship.info/missional>.

or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus (NRSV).”

We take Galatians as a clue to the way the Church should be ordered. We interpret the reference to women the same way we interpret the reference to slaves. If we have submissive roles for women, we must also have a place for the slaves in the Church.

In Galatians Paul follows the spirit of Jesus who courageously challenged the conventional wisdom of his day. It was a wisdom with rigid boundaries between men and women in religion and in public life. Jesus deliberately broke those barriers. He called women to follow him; he treated women as equally capable of dealing with sacred issues. Our model for the role of women in matters of faith is the Lord Jesus.<sup>16</sup>

The Fellowship insists that women may be pastors or hold any other leadership role in their denomination.

- F. What I am arguing, though far from universally true, is that there is a general tendency among self-identified missional and emerging churches to allow a greater role for women in church ministry and leadership positions, particularly the office of pastor/elder. As in the case of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, there is often a denial of the traditional, complementarian role of women in the church, and a reinterpretation of key biblical texts to support the new, egalitarian viewpoint. The missional church movement is more normally aligned with egalitarianism.

## II. Framing the Issue

- A. These terms, *complementarian* and *egalitarian*, are the commonly used labels for the two major viewpoints within broad evangelicalism concerning the role of women in the church. Complementarianism affirms

that men and women are equal in the image of God, but maintain complementary differences in role and function. In the home, men lovingly are to lead their wives and family as women intelligently are to submit to the leadership of their husbands. In the church, while men and women share equally in the blessings of salvation, some governing and teaching roles are restricted to men.<sup>17</sup>

The complementarian position is represented by the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW). The CBMW was officially formed in December 1987 at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS) in Danvers, MA.<sup>18</sup> At that meeting the Council drew up their founding document, the Danvers Statement,<sup>19</sup> though it was not finalized and made public until November 1988 at the next ETS meeting. It was later published as an advertisement in *Christianity Today* on January 13, 1989. According to Wayne Grudem, the leading light behind the CBMW, it was at this meeting that the term *complementarian* was coined.<sup>20</sup> The name was chosen because “it suggests both equality and beneficial differences between men and women.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>“Address to the Public: The founding document of Cooperative Baptist Fellowship,” accessed September 13, 2010, <http://www.thefellowship.info/Files/About-Us/Address.aspx>.

<sup>17</sup>The Council on Biblical Manhood & Womanhood, “About Us,” accessed September 27, 2010, <http://www.cbmw.org/About-Us>.

<sup>18</sup>Wayne Grudem, “Personal Reflections on the History of CBMW and the State of the Gender Debate,” *Journal for Biblical Manhood & Womanhood* 14 (Spring 2009): 14.

<sup>19</sup><http://www.cbmw.org/Danvers>.

<sup>20</sup>Grudem, “Personal Reflections on the History of CBMW,” p. 14.

<sup>21</sup>John Piper and Wayne Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway,

- B. Egalitarianism is also commonly known as evangelical feminism. It is an outgrowth of the secular feminist movement that reemerged in North America in the early 1960s.<sup>22</sup> In the early 1970s conservative evangelicals began to incorporate feminist ideas into their theology.<sup>23</sup> In 1974 biblical feminists founded the Evangelical Women’s Caucus (EWC). Though originally conservative, it eventually took a positive stance toward homosexuality. This led some members of the EWC to form a new organization in 1987 called Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE),<sup>24</sup> which today represents the more conservative egalitarian position. In July 1989 they produced their founding statement, “Men, Women, and Biblical Equality,”<sup>25</sup> which was later published as an advertisement in *Christianity Today* on April 9, 1990. CBE believes that “all believers—without regard to gender, ethnicity or class—must exercise their God-given gifts with equal authority and equal responsibility in church, home and world.”<sup>26</sup> So CBE (egalitarianism) differs from CBMW (complementarianism) in that the former sees no leadership role for the husband in marriage and also insists that there is no leadership role in the church that is reserved for men.
- C. Egalitarians come to their position by interpreting certain key verses in Scripture quite differently than they have traditionally been understood. One of the most important of these texts is 1 Corinthians 11:3. There Paul says, “But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.”<sup>27</sup> Traditionally, the word “head,” the Greek *kephalē* (κεφαλή), has been understood in the figurative sense of “authority over.” Thus, Paul is saying that Christ is the authority over every man, and the man is the authority over a woman, and God is the authority over Christ. Equally important for the issue of the role of women in the church and the home is the use of “head,” *kephalē*, in Ephesians 5:23, “For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself *being* the Savior of the body.” Again, Paul would seem to be affirming that the husband is the authority over his wife just as Christ is the authority over his church.
- D. It would appear that these two verses argue for a general authority of men over women and a unique authority for the husband in marriage that is parallel to Christ’s authority over his church. The force of these verses is well understood by egalitarians. For

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1991, p. xiv. Grudem has recently complained that egalitarians are objecting to complementarians’ use of the term and are attempting to co-opt it for their own use (Wayne Grudem, *Countering the Claims of Evangelical Feminism* [Colorado Springs, CO: Multomah, 2006, p. 13). See Ronald W. Pierce and Rebecca M. Groothuis, *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity Without Hierarchy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), p. 15.

<sup>22</sup>Mary A. Kassian, *The Feminist Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1992), p. 15.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 206.

<sup>24</sup>“Christian Feminists form New Organization,” *Christianity Today*, 16 October 1987, p. 44.

<sup>25</sup>[www.cbeinternational.org/?q=content/men-women-and-biblical-equality](http://www.cbeinternational.org/?q=content/men-women-and-biblical-equality).

<sup>26</sup>CBE Mission Statement, accessed September 29, 2010, <http://www.cbeinternational.org/?q=content/our-mission-and-history>.

<sup>27</sup>Unless otherwise noted, all scriptural references are to the 1995 edition of the *New American Standard Bible*.

example, the Mickelsens (egalitarians) say: “The belief of some Christians that the Bible teaches a hierarchy, with men in a role of authority over women (basically over all women and very specifically over their wives) is based largely on two references by Paul to males (or husbands) as the ‘head’ of women (or wives), 1 Corinthians 11:3 and Ephesians 5:23.”<sup>28</sup> Egalitarians have developed a number of ways to blunt the force of these two verses, but primarily they have argued that *kephalē* does not mean “authority over” but some sense less problematic for their position, such as “source.”

### III. The Meaning of *Kephalē*

- A. The understating of “source” for *kephalē* (κεφαλή) in 1 Corinthians 11:3 is a new and novel idea. No English translation has every adopted this gloss. The translation “head” is found in the KJV, RV, ASV, RSV, NEB, JB, NAB, NASB, NIV, NKJV, REB, NRSV, CEB, CEV, TNIV, NET BIBLE, HCSB, and ESV.<sup>29</sup> As might be expected, until recently no commentary ever suggested “source” as a possible meaning. Even Gordon Fee, who argues for “source” in his respected commentary, admits that “head” “is often understood to be hierarchical, setting up structures of authority” and that such was the universal understanding of the commentaries until Barrett (1968) and Conzelmann (1975).<sup>30</sup> The standard lexicon of New Testament Greek (BDAG), which is usually considered authoritative on issues of meaning, lists only two senses for *kephalē*, one literal, “the part of the body that contains the brain, *head*,” and one figurative, “a being of high status, *head*.” This figurative meaning is subdivided into two parts, the first of which is “in the case of living beings, to denote superior rank.” It is into this category that the lexicon places 1 Corinthians 11:3 and Ephesians 5:23.<sup>31</sup>
- B. The first scholar to suggest the translation “source” for *kephalē* in 1 Corinthians 11:3 was probably Stephen Bedale in a short four-page article in 1954.<sup>32</sup> He argued that in normal Greek usage *kephalē* does not normally mean “head” in the sense of “ruler.” Thus it has no sense of “authority over.” Second, Bedale insists that the ancients had no concept of the head controlling the physical body so that the idea of the Christ the head of the church ruling his body is impossible in a text like Ephesians 4:15 (“but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ”). Thus in Ephesians 4:15 (and Col 2:19) *kephalē* probably means “source.” It is

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<sup>28</sup>Berkeley & Alvera Mickelsen, “What Does *KEPHALĒ* Mean in the New Testament?” in *Women Authority and the Bible*, ed. Alvera Mickelsen (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986) p. 97.

<sup>29</sup>The NLT, which is a more periphrastic translation, does not use “head” but gives an even more explicit translation: “a woman is responsible to her husband.”

<sup>30</sup>Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), p. 502. However, Fee admits that even Barrett and Conzelmann “opt for some form of ‘subordination’ as inherent in the metaphor” (ibid.).

<sup>31</sup>Walter Bauer, Frederick W. Danker, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed, rev and ed, Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 542.

<sup>32</sup>“The Meaning of Κεφαλή in the Pauline Epistles,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 5 (1954): 211–15. For a helpful chronological survey of the debate over the meaning of *kephalē*, albeit from an egalitarian perspective, see Alan F. Johnson, “A Review of the Scholarly Debate on the Meaning of ‘Head’ (κεφαλή) in Paul’s Writings,” *Ashland Theological Journal* 41 (2009): 35–57.

interesting that this is the one and only use of the word *source* in the entire article even though this article is commonly appealed to as proving *kephalē* means “source.” Finally, Bedale argues that Paul’s understanding of the metaphorical meaning of *kephalē* comes from its use in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew *rō’š*. Since both *kephalē* and *archē* (ἀρχή) are used to translate *rō’š* in the Septuagint, Bedale concludes that *kephalē* may approximate the meaning of *archē* in the New Testament. This suggests that as a metaphor *kephalē* may have a lesser sense of “beginning” rather than “authority over.” Thus in a text like 1 Corinthians 11:3, the idea is that the woman derives her being from the man; he is her “beginning,” or “source.” However, Bedale still insists in the case of our specific text, 1 Corinthians 11:3, “the word κεφαλή (and ἀρχή also for that matter) unquestionably carries with it the idea of ‘authority.’”<sup>33</sup>

- C. Bedale’s article would not appear to have exactly overthrown the traditional meaning of *kephalē* as expressing “authority over,” but it quickly became the authority to which those who wished to understand *kephalē* as “source” in 1 Corinthians 11:3 commonly appealed. For example, F. F. Bruce says: “By head in this context we are probably to understand not, as has frequently been suggested, ‘chief’ or ‘ruler’ but rather ‘source’ or ‘origin’—a sense well attested for Gk *kephalē*.”<sup>34</sup> Bruce sights Bedale as his only proof that *kephalē* means “source.” Literature by egalitarians picked up on Bedale’s suggestion and universally began to point to “source” as the true meaning of *kephalē* in 1 Corinthians 11:3. For example, Berkeley and Alvera Mickelsen published two influential articles in *Christianity Today* in which they castigate English Bible translations for their rendering of *kephalē* with “head” and argue that “source” is the correct meaning.<sup>35</sup>
- D. When Wayne Grudem, who at the time was a professor at Bethel College in St. Paul, MN, read the articles by the Mickelsens and began to study the issue, he was convinced that the traditional understanding of texts like 1 Corinthians 11:3 and Ephesians 5:23 was correct and that “source” was an invalid translation of *kephalē* in these verses. In 1985 he published a scholarly rebuttal entitled “Does *Kephalē* Mean ‘Source’ or ‘Authority Over’? An Examination of 2,336 Examples.”<sup>36</sup> Grudem’s article led to an invitation for him to speak at a plenary session of the 1986 meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, whose theme was “Manhood and Womanhood in Biblical and Theological Perspectives.” The other five plenary speakers were egalitarians (Gilbert Bilezekian, Catheline Kroeger, Walter Liefeld, Aida Spencer, and David Scholer).<sup>37</sup> It was as a result of this meeting that Grudem and other likeminded individuals began writing the aforementioned Danvers Statement and forming the CBMW. They also laid plans for a book of essays to address the egalitarian issue that was published in 1991,

<sup>33</sup>“The Meaning of Κεφαλή in the Pauline Epistles,” p. 215.

<sup>34</sup>F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), p. 103.

<sup>35</sup>“Does Male Dominance Tarnish Our Translations?” *Christianity Today*, 5 October 1979, pp. 23-29 and “The ‘Head’ of the Epistles,” *Christianity Today*, 20 February 1981, pp. 20-23.

<sup>36</sup>*Trinity Journal* 6 (Spring 1985): 38–59. This article was simultaneously published as appendix 1 in George W. Knight III, *The Role Relationship of Men and Women* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985) pp. 49–80.

<sup>37</sup>Grudem, “Personal Reflections on the History of CBMW,” p. 13.

entitled *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*.<sup>38</sup> The book was published by Crossway Books, which has been an ally for the complementarian cause ever since, even as most other evangelical publishers have drifted into the egalitarian camp.

- E. In his 1985 article Grudem challenged the position of Bedale, the Mickelsens, and other egalitarian writers. He notes that Bedale himself never cites any ancient Greek source outside the Bible to prove his position that *kephalē* means “source.” Grudem did an extensive search of nearly all Greek literature using a computer database (*Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*) and analyzed 2,336 instances of *kephalē* from the eight century B.C. to the fourth century A.D. As might be expected *kephalē* is most commonly used in Greek literature in a literal sense to designate the physical head of a person or animal, but Grudem found thirty-two examples outside of the New Testament itself of *kephalē* used in a figurative or metaphorical sense to mean “authority over” or ruler.<sup>39</sup> For example, Judges 10:18: “And the people, the leaders of Gilead, said to one another, ‘Who is the man that will begin to fight against the Ammonites? He shall be *head* over all the inhabitants of Gilead.’”<sup>40</sup> Again, in 2 Kings (2 Samuel) 22:44: David says to God, “You shall keep me as the *head* of the Gentiles: a people which I knew not served me.” David is called the *head* or *ruler* of the people he conquered. In the New Testament it would seem to be beyond debate that *kephalē* means “authority over” in a text like Ephesians 1:22: “And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church”; and Colossians 2:10: “And in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority.” Bedale also argues that the ancients had no concept of the head controlling the physical body so that the idea of the Christ the head of the church ruling his body is impossible in a text like Ephesians 4:15. But Grudem demonstrates with quotes from Plato, Plutarch, and Philo, that ancient writers did in fact employ such a concept.<sup>41</sup> Finally, Grudem shows that Bedale’s argument that both *kephalē* and *archē* (ἀρχή) are used to translate *rō’s* in the Septuagint proves nothing since Bedale never gives one example where either *kephalē* or *archē* mean “source” in the Septuagint.<sup>42</sup> In his own study of 2,336 uses of *kephalē*, Grudem finds, contrary to Bedale, no clear instance of the meaning “source.”<sup>43</sup>
- F. In 1989 Joseph Fitzmyer, apparently without any knowledge of Grudem’s earlier article, also challenges the idea that *kephalē* could mean “source.”<sup>44</sup> He comes to the same conclusion as Grudem. But it was Grudem’s 1985 article that attracted the most attention. Numerous individuals attacked Grudem’s conclusions and defended the meaning of

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 15. Available as a pdf at <http://www.cbmw.org/images/onlinebooks/biblicalfoundations.pdf>.

<sup>39</sup>“Does *Kephalē* Mean ‘Source’ or ‘Authority Over’?” pp. 41, 54–56.

<sup>40</sup>This is the reading of Alexandrinus.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>44</sup>Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “Another Look at ΚΕΦΑΛΗ in 1 Corinthians 11:3,” *New Testament Studies* 35 (October 1989): 503–11. Fitzmyer wrote a follow-up article in which he suggests that *kephalē* can mean “source,” though “authority over” is more common and that “authority over” is without question the correct understanding in 1 Cor 11:3 (“*Kephalē* in 1 Corinthians 11:3,” *Interpretation* 47 [January 1993]: 52–59).

“source” for *kephalē*.<sup>45</sup> The principal challenge to Grudem’s study was a 1989 article by Richard Cervin in the same journal that published Grudem’s original article.<sup>46</sup> Cervin argues that while “source” is not a common meaning for *kephalē* it does occur rarely. He correctly demonstrates that two of Grudem’s examples for *kephalē* were cited by Grudem in error since a different Greek word is used. Finally, Cervin concludes that outside the New Testament *kephalē* never means “authority over”; instead, the gloss “preeminence” expresses the meaning best.<sup>47</sup>

- G. In 1990 Grudem responded to his critics (mainly Cervin) with a seventy-page article.<sup>48</sup> Grudem admits that two of the examples in his original article were cited incorrectly as Cervin observed, but that hardly affects Grudem’s overall conclusion. He challenges Cervin’s idea that *kephalē* can mean “preeminence” since, for one thing, this meaning is not found in any Greek lexicon. Grudem does not dispute that *kephalē* may carry overtones of “preeminence” or perhaps “prominence, but these terms always carry with them overtones of authority in the examples where *kephalē* is used.<sup>49</sup> Grudem responds to others who continue to argue for “source,” arguing that no one has been able to demonstrate a single unambiguous example of *kephalē* with that meaning, while the meaning “ruler, authority over” is found quite clearly in forty-one ancient texts in biblical and extra-biblical literature.<sup>50</sup>
- H. In 1993 the *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, destined to become a standard reference work, was published with an article on Paul’s use of *head* by Catherine Kroeger, who was one of the founders of the CBE.<sup>51</sup> She argues that Grudem is wrong and that *kephalē* means “source.” Then, in a 1994 article Perriman suggested that *kephalē* does not mean either “source” or “authority over,” but, more in line with Cervin, means something like “prominent.” Even so, according to Perriman, 1 Corinthians 11:3 has “little or nothing to do with the issue of the man’s authority over the woman.”<sup>52</sup> In 2001 what is destined to become one of the standard, authoritative commentaries on 1 Corinthians was produced by Anthony Thiselton.<sup>53</sup> He also rejects both the meanings

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<sup>45</sup>E.g., Berkeley & Alvera Mickelsen, “What Does *KEPHALĒ* Mean in the New Testament?” in *Women Authority and the Bible*, ed. Alvera Mickelsen (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986) pp. 97–132; Gilbert Bilezikian, “A Critical Examination of Wayne Grudem’s Treatment of *Kephalē* in Ancient Greek Texts,” Appendix to *Beyond Sex Roles*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), pp. 215–52.

<sup>46</sup>Richard S. Cervin, “Does *Κεφαλή* Mean ‘Source’ or ‘Authority Over’ in Greek Literature? A Rebuttal,” *Trinity Journal* 10 (Spring 1989): 85–112.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 112.

<sup>48</sup>“The Meaning of *Κεφαλή* (‘Head’): A Response to Recent Studies,” *Trinity Journal* 11 (Spring 1990): 3–72.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>51</sup>*Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, s.v. “Head,” by C. C. Kroeger, pp. 375–77 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993). Kroeger had earlier argued this position in “The Classical Concept of *Head* as Source,” Appendix 3 in *Equal to Serve*, by Gretchen G. Hull (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1987), pp. 267–83.

<sup>52</sup>A. C. Perriman, “The Head of a Woman: The Meaning of *ΚΕΦΑΛΗ* in 1 Cor. 11:3,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 45 (October 1994): 620.

<sup>53</sup>Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Greek Testament

“source” and “authority over” for *kephalē* and instead proposes (though not strongly) that, along with Cervin and Perriman, the gloss “preeminent” or “foremost” best captures Paul’s thought.<sup>54</sup>

- I. Finally, in 2001 Grudem produced another long article designed to address the latest attempts to overthrow the traditional understanding of “authority over” for *kephalē*.<sup>55</sup> The bulk of the article is a detailed rebuttal of Kroeger’s essay in the *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*. Grudem basically accuses here of academic misconduct in that she makes claims that are patently false. For instance, she cites a quotation from Chrysostom that does not actually exist. In other cases she cites sources to prove that *kephalē* means “source” that do not actually use the word *kephalē*. Grudem concludes that Kroeger’s attempt to prove that *kephalē* means “source” is an utter failure. In relation to the view of Perriman and Thiselton (and Cervin), Grudem repeats his challenge that no lexicon has ever suggested that *kephalē* should be translated “prominent,” “preeminent” or “foremost.” In fact, the idea of “preeminent” would seem to create more problems than it solves since it imports the idea of male superiority into the text (e.g., “the man is preeminent over the woman”).<sup>56</sup> On the other hand, no one would deny that the person who is “head” is “prominent” in some sense.
- J. Given that hundreds, even thousands, of pages that have been written on the issue, it is difficult, if not impossible, for me to convey the true force of the arguments without actually looking at all the examples of the usage of *kephalē* individually. The previous recital of the arguments back and forth may leave one with the impression that no definitive conclusion can be drawn since so many scholars disagree. However, it appears to me that Grudem has convincingly proven his case that *kephalē* is clearly used in ancient Greek literature with the figurative sense of “authority over.” As far as I can determine, *kephalē* is found in numerous contexts where it refers to people who have authority over others of whom they are the “head.” No one has yet given an example where one person is called the *kephalē* of another person and that person is not the one in authority over that other person. Although a number of examples are cited to prove that *kephalē* means “source,” it does not appear to ever have such a meaning without also conveying a sense of authority.

#### IV. *Kephalē* in 1 Corinthians 11:3

- A. In chapters 11–14 Paul deals with problems in the Corinthian church related to public worship. The first in 11:2–16 is concerned with a woman’s head covering when praying and prophesying.<sup>57</sup> Paul begins in v. 2 with a statement of praise for the Corinthians:

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Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., pp. 812–22.

<sup>55</sup>Wayne Grudem, “The Meaning of Κεφαλή “Head”): An Evaluation of New Evidence, Real and Alleged,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44 (March 2001): 25–65. This article was updated in 2002 (to interact with Thiselton’s commentary) as chapter 5 in Wayne Grudem, ed., *Biblical Foundation for Manhood and Womanhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002). Page references are from the latter edition.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 196.

<sup>57</sup>The chapter division in our English Bibles at chapter 11 is unfortunate since it is now generally agreed that chapter 11:1 goes with chapter 10.

“Now I praise you because you remember me in everything, and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you.” Probably, these words serve as a complimentary introduction to all of chapters 11–14 before Paul begins to level some criticisms. Though the Corinthians had problems, they were not an apostate church. They were keeping certain unmentioned “traditions.” However, there was a problem with some women at Corinth who were discarding the traditional head covering.

- B. There has been disagreement over the nature of the head covering Paul is referring to in 1 Corinthians 11. The traditional view suggests that Paul has reference to an external head covering. Two points have contributed to questions about this view. One is a lack of agreement about whether or not women in Corinth traditionally wore a head covering. Second is a difficulty in v. 15, where we are told that the woman’s “hair is given to her for a covering.” This has led some to understand the word “for” (*anti*) to mean “in place of,” that is, the woman’s hair is given to her “in place of” an external covering. The woman’s hair as a covering has been interpreted in two different ways: (1) The covering Paul is arguing for in vv. 4–7 and 13 is actually the long hair of vv. 14–15, and the problem is that some of the women were having their hair cut short;<sup>58</sup> (2) In more recent times, several scholars have argued on the basis of the usage in the Septuagint that the adjective “uncovered” in v. 5 (*akatakaluptos*, ἀκατακάλυπτος) refers to “loosed hair,” that is, to letting one’s hair down in public and thus experiencing shame.<sup>59</sup> In this view Paul wants women to follow the custom of piling their hair up on top of their heads.
- C. The arguments for and against these views are long and complex. However, I prefer the traditional view. The word “for” in v. 15 can rightly be understood, as the standard Greek lexicon argues (BDAG), to mean “that one thing is equivalent to another.”<sup>60</sup> Thus the idea would be that “her hair has been given to her as a covering” (so NIV, HCSB). Paul is arguing by analogy that since women by “nature” have been given long hair as a sort of natural covering, that in itself points to their need to be “covered” when praying and prophesying. The biggest problem for those who deny an external covering is the language grammar of vv. 5–6. The words “covered” and “uncovered” speak of an external covering. All the available scholarly evidence suggests that the adjective “uncovered” in v. 5 (*akatakaluptos*, ἀκατακάλυπτος) when used in connection with “head” always, as Massey notes, “describes socially significant behavior of having one’s head uncovered or unveiled. When this adjective describes the head of a married woman, it indicates immodest dress which has the potential to shame or embarrass her

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<sup>58</sup>Kirk R. MacGregor, “Is 1 Corinthians 11:2–16 a Prohibition of Homosexuality?” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 166 (April–June 2009): 201–16; A Philip Brown II, “Εικόν και Δόξα Θεοῦ: An Interpretive Key to 1 Cor 11:2–16, Bible Faculty Leadership Summit, 2003.

<sup>59</sup>Abel Isaksson, *Marriage and Ministry in the New Temple*, trans. Neil Tomkinson (Lund, Denmark: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1965), pp. 155–85; James B. Hurley, “Did Paul Require Veils or the Silence of Women? A Consideration of 1 Cor 11:2–16 and 1 Cor 14:33b–36,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 35 (Winter 1973): 190–220; idem, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), pp. 162–84; Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, “Sex and Logic in 1 Corinthians 11:2–16,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 42 (October 1980): 482–500.

<sup>60</sup>S.v. “□ντ□,” p. 88.

husband.”<sup>61</sup> Again, all the available Greek evidence also demonstrates that the cognate verb “covered” (*katakalyptō*, κατακαλύπτω) in vv. 6 and 7 always refers to an external covering.<sup>62</sup>

- D. The latest research into Roman clothing practices suggests that married women normally wore a head covering in public. Winter notes that “it was the social indicator by which the marital status of a woman was made clear to everyone.”<sup>63</sup> Sebesta argues that the head covering “symbolized the husband’s authority over his wife.”<sup>64</sup> Most likely, then, Paul has reference to some women who were not wearing an external head covering. Now, unless one believes that the custom should be applied to our culture, it is not all that important to identify the exact form of covering. The main point is that the woman’s action is considered shameful, and for that reason Paul is willing to offer a theological reason for maintaining the custom of head coverings.
- E. Next, in v. 3 Paul sets forth the principle of subordination that will become the theological basis for his argument that women at Corinth cannot forsake the traditional head covering: “But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.” The statement itself is divided into three parts. Each part uses the word “head” metaphorically to express a different relationship: man/Christ, woman/man, Christ/God. The word “head,” as I have argued, means “authority over.” Paul is saying that Christ is the authority over every man, man is the authority over woman, and God is the authority over Christ. Paul is appealing to the relationship between two members of the Trinity, in this case the Father and the Son, thus it is transparent that he does not view the relationships described in this verse as simply cultural or the result of the fall.
- F. Paul’s main point is the second clause, “the man is the head of a woman”; so why the other two clauses? Probably, they are included to explain and clarify the second clause. In other words, the clause that might be controversial, as well as misunderstood, is sandwiched in between the other two.<sup>65</sup> Christ becomes the model for the man’s headship over the woman since He “is the head of every man.” By being in submission to his Father, Christ is also the model for the woman’s submission to the man. The woman’s submission to the man involves no inferiority of her person or nature anymore than Christ’s submission to the Father suggests any inferiority.<sup>66</sup> We understand, of course, that God has authority over Christ in a functional sense, not an ontological one—so also the man/woman relationship. Because both the words for “man” (*anēr*, ἀνὴρ) and

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<sup>61</sup>Preston T. Massey, “The Meaning of κατακαλύπτω and κατὰ κεφαλῆς ἔξων in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16,” *New Testament Studies* 53 (October 2007): 522. See also BAGD, s.v. “ἀκατακάλυπτος,” p. 35.

<sup>62</sup>Massey, “The Meaning of κατακαλύπτω,” pp. 523.

<sup>63</sup>Bruce W. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), p. 127.

<sup>64</sup>Judith L. Sebesta, “Symbolism in the Costume of the Roman Woman,” in *The World of Roman Costume*, ed. Judith L. Sebesta and Larissa Bontante (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), p. 48.

<sup>65</sup>George W. Knight III, *The Role Relationship of Men and Women*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), p. 21.

<sup>66</sup>Jack Cottrell, “Christ: A Model for Headship and Submission,” *CBMW News* 2 (September 1997): 7–8.

“woman” (*gunē*, γυνή) can mean “man/husband” or “woman/wife,” it is not clear if Paul is setting forth a principle that involves all men and women generally or just husbands and wives. For example, the ESV translates the second clause: “the head of the wife is her husband.” Fung is probably correct to suggest that Paul is “announcing the general principle of headship of man in relation to woman, a principle which finds its primary application and obvious illustration in the specific husband-wife relationship.”<sup>67</sup>

- G. As we have noted, most egalitarians argue that *kephalē* should be translated “source” in v. 3. They insist that to speak of God the Father as the authority over Christ in his resurrected state is to speak heretically. For example Payne says:

Under the interpretation that ‘head’ mean ‘authority,’ the present tense of *estin* [“is”] requires that Christ now in the present time after his resurrection and ascension is under the authority of God. Such a view has been condemned throughout most of church history as subordinationist Christology. The Arians use this “head as authority” interpretation as a favorite proof that Christ is inferior to the Father.<sup>68</sup>

It is true that Arianism taught a subordinationist Christology that advocated a subordination of the essence or being of the Son, meaning that Christ was not of the same essence (*homoousios*, ὁμοούσιος) as the Father.<sup>69</sup> But most orthodox theologians have consistently upheld a proper subordination of the role or function of the Son to the Father, commonly called the economic Trinity. For instance A. H Strong says:

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, while equal in essence and dignity, stand to each other in an order of personality, office, and operation....

The subordination of the *person* of the Son to the *person* of the Father, or in other words an order of personality, office, and operation which permits the Father to be officially first, the Son second, and the Spirit third, is perfectly consistent with equality. Priority is not necessarily superiority....

We frankly recognize an eternal subordination of Christ to the Father, but we maintain at the same time that this subordination is a subordination of order, office, and operation, not a subordination of essence.<sup>70</sup>

Kovach notes:

Until recently, the doctrine of eternal subordination was questioned by few. From the second century A.D. until today, the orthodox church has held that Scripture teaches the Son’s eternal subordination to the Father. Almost all recent systematic theology texts that discuss the issue reflect this reality, including works written by Baptists (A. H. Strong, Gordon R. Lewis, Bruce Demarest), Lutherans (John Theodore Mueller), Anglicans (Edward A. Litton), Arminians (John Miley, Thomas Oden), Reformed theologians (Charles Hodge, Robert L. Dabney, Benjamin B. Warfield, William G.

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<sup>67</sup>Ronald Y. K. Fung, “Ministry in the New Testament,” in *The Church in the Bible and the World*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), p. 186.

<sup>68</sup>Philip B. Payne, “Response” to “What Does *KEPHALĒ* Mean in the New Testament?” in *Women Authority and the Bible*, ed. Alvera Mickelsen (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986), pp. 126–27.

<sup>69</sup>Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), pp. 244–45.

<sup>70</sup>*Systematic Theology* (reprint of 1907 ed.; Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1974), p. 342. See also Stephen D. Kovach and Peter R. Schemm, Jr., “A Defense of the Doctrine of the Eternal Subordination of the Son,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 42 (September 1999): 461–76; Bruce A. Ware, “Equal in Essence, Distinct in Roles: Eternal Functional Authority and Submission Among the Essentially Equal Divine Persons of the Godhead,” *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 13 (Fall 2008): 43–58.

T. Shedd, Louis Berkhof, Wayne Grudem), and charismatics (G. Rodman Williams).<sup>71</sup>

- H. Even if we supposed that *kephalē* means “source” in 1 Corinthians 11:3, the parallelism within the verse is awkward to say the least.<sup>72</sup> One could say that man is the source of the woman in that Eve was physically taken from Adam and that she had no existence prior to that time. But how is Christ the source of every man? Adam was not physically taken from Christ. We could say that Christ is the source of Adam in the he came into existence through the creative work of Christ as creator. But Adam is not the source of Eve such that she came into existence through the creative work of Adam. And God the Father cannot be said to be the source of Christ since he was not physically taken from God the Father or created by him. For egalitarians to say that the Father is the source of Christ is exactly what the Arians taught. But if *kephalē* means “authority over,” then the parallelism drawn by Paul works well. Christ is the authority over every man, and the man is the authority over the woman, and God is the authority over Christ.

## V. Conclusions for Ministry Based upon Women’s Subordination

- A. Since Paul says that man is the authority over the woman, how does that affect the role of women in the ministry of the church? Obviously, since some functions or offices in the church involve the exercise of authority, such as pastor/elder, these would be off limits to women. This would also include the office of deacon, if, as in many churches, the office involves governing authority. Women would also be prohibited from teaching men since teachers inherently exercise authority over their students. But egalitarians argue this understanding of 1 Corinthians 11: 3 cannot be correct since just two verses later in v. 5, Paul, it is argued, permits women to engage in gospel proclamation ministry when he speaks of women as “prophesying.”
- B. If we continue with the argument of our passage, in vv. 4–6 Paul draws a conclusion based upon the principle of women’s subordination affirmed in v. 3. Paul continues in v. 4: “Every man who has *something* on his head while praying or prophesying, disgraces his head.” Paul begins his discussion with the men. He seems to be setting up his argument with the women in vv. 5–6 by means of a hypothetical situation.<sup>73</sup> If a man were to have his head covered when praying or prophesying, he would bring shame to his head—Christ. This is so because a head covering was what women wore to show their subordination to men. If a man wore a head covering, he would be shamefully depicting himself as a woman. By not conforming to the role God intended, the man brings dishonor on himself and his authority, Jesus Christ.
- C. By way of contrast in v. 5a, Paul addresses the women with a sentence that is an exact parallel with v. 4: “But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying, disgraces her head.” The woman brings shame on her “head” if she prays or prophesies with her head uncovered. “Her head” refers to the man. This means that she

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<sup>71</sup>Stephen D. Kovach, “Egalitarians Revamp Doctrine of Trinity,” *CBMW News* 2 (December 1996), p. 1.

<sup>72</sup>See Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective*, p. 166.

<sup>73</sup>Fee, *Corinthians*, p. 504. It is possible that some Corinthian men may have been actually covering their heads in imitation of pagan priests who were known to have done so. See Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, p. 122 and Gregory J. Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia, 2000), p. 366.

disgraces the man in terms of the male/female relationship by showing a disregard for God's order of subordination. She does this by dressing like a man, that is, not wearing a head covering. At Corinth, if a woman failed to wear a head covering and so dressed like a man, she brought shame both on herself, and on the man. This is because her behavior would be a symbol of her rebellion against the created order, the intended relationship between men and women.

- D. Two problems arise with the reference to the woman “praying or prophesying.” First, we must determine what is meant by “prophesying.” Egalitarians understand prophecy to include teaching and leadership, so that if women can prophesy in the church, they can also teach God's Word and be pastors. For example, Belleville says:

Teaching was also a part of what a prophet did. “You can all prophesy in turn,” Paul says to the Corinthians, “so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged” (1 Cor 14:31; cf. 14:19 “to instruct,” *katēcheō*). Since there were women prophets in Corinth (1 Cor 11:5), instruction was most definitely part of their role.<sup>74</sup>

Belleville adds that “*prophet* was also a recognized leadership role,” and “the prophet's job description included...corporate leadership activities.”<sup>75</sup>

- E. We should first note that in the previous quote by Belleville, where she connects the word “instruct” (*katēcheō*) in 1 Corinthians 14:19 with the gift of prophecy, amazingly, this verse does not even mention prophecy: “However, in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind so that I may instruct [*katēcheō*] others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue.” In any case, this understanding of the gift of prophecy, especially in the New Testament, is incorrect. Hoehner offers a helpful explanation:

In the New Testament the verb form [προφητεῖω] is used twenty-eight times and it always has (with the possible exception of John 11:51) the idea of revelation flowing from God. Paul uses it eleven times. He uses it nine times in 1 Corinthians 12–14 and two times in 1 Corinthians 11:45 [*sic*, 11:4–5]. The noun *prophēteia* is used nineteen times in the New Testament. Paul uses it once in Romans 12:6 and five times in 1 Corinthians 12–14. The consistent New Testament idea is that a prophecy is an actual message or oracle from God. The word is not used in the New Testament to refer to the interpretation of an oracle by a skilled interpreter. In short, prophecy in Paul cannot denote anything other than inspired speech. And prophecy as charisma is neither skill nor aptitude nor talent; the charisma is the actual speaking forth of words given by the Spirit in a particular situation and ceases when the words cease.<sup>76</sup>

The gift of prophecy is not to be necessarily equated with teaching and governing activities. In prophecy God puts his words into the mouth of the prophet who is basically a mouthpiece for God. Prophecy is listed as a separate gift from teachers and pastors in Ephesians 4:11. The gift of prophecy is also distinguished from the gift of teaching in Romans 12:6–7 and 1 Corinthians 12:28. Schreiner explains:

Prophecy is not the same gift as teaching, for the latter represents the transmission of tradition or

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<sup>74</sup>Linda L. Belleville, *Women Leaders and the Church: Three Crucial Questions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), p. 59.

<sup>75</sup>Linda L. Belleville, “Women in Ministry,” in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, ed. James R. Beck and Craig L. Blomberg (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), p. 97.

<sup>76</sup>Harold W. Hoehner, “The Purpose of Tongues in 1 Corinthians 14:20–25,” in *Walvoord: A Tribute*, ed. Donald K. Campbell (Chicago: Moody Press, 1982), pp. 56–57.

Scripture which involves preparation before delivery. Prophecy, on the other hand, is the transmission of spontaneous revelations from God (1 Cor 14:29-33). This is confirmed by the prophetic ministry of Agabus who received spontaneous revelations from God about the famine in Jerusalem and Paul's imprisonment (Acts 11:27-28; 21:10-11). His prophecies were not prepared messages, but revelations that came from the Lord that he conveyed to God's people.

The office of pastor/elder is primarily one of governance and teaching (1 Tim 5:17). When Paul lists the qualifications for pastors, the ability to teach is essential, but the gift of prophecy is not mentioned (1 Tim 3:2). Paul clearly forbids women from the teaching office in the church: "But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man" (1 Tim 2:12). But that would not forbid women from prophesying as I have defined the gift.

- F. The second problem with women "praying or prophesying" is how can such speaking be harmonized with the prohibition in 1 Corinthians 14:33, where we are told that "women are to keep silent in the churches"? According to Fish, until the twentieth century this dilemma was commonly solved by insisting that 1 Corinthians 11:5 does not actually give permission for women to prophesy.<sup>77</sup> This was John Calvin's view:

But it seems to be unnecessary for Paul to forbid a woman to prophesy bare-headed, since in 1 Tim 2:12 he debar[s] women from speaking in the church altogether. Therefore they would have no right to prophesy, even with their heads covered, and the obvious conclusion is that it is a waste of time for Paul to be discussing the question of head covering here. The answer can be given that when the apostle disapproves of the one thing here, he is not giving his approval to the other. For when he takes them to task because they were prophesying bare-headed, he is not giving them permission, however, to prophesy in any other way whatever, but rather is delaying the censure of that fault to another passage (chapter 14:34ff). That is a perfectly adequate answer.<sup>78</sup>

It may go without saying that modern interpreters have not found this solution satisfying. Schreiner quite rightly objects to Calvin's view: "It is hard to believe anyone has seriously advocated this view, for why would Paul bother to spend fifteen verses in 1 Corinthians 11 specifying the adornment of women when they prophesy if he does not believe they should do it at all."<sup>79</sup>

- G. Another way to solve the apparent conflict between 1 Corinthians 11:5 and 14:33 is to argue that in 11:5 Paul is referring to prayer and prophecy that does not take place in the public worship of the church but in private gatherings of believers, whereas Paul's command for women to be silent is strictly in the church.<sup>80</sup> But as we noticed earlier, it is

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<sup>77</sup>John H. Fish III, "Women Speaking in the Church: The Relationship of 1 Corinthians 11:5 and 14:34–36," *Emmaus Journal* 1 (Fall 1992): 246.

<sup>78</sup>John Calvin, *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, trans. John W. Fraser, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance (reprint of 1960 ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), p. 231. This view is also followed by Charles Hodge, *An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (reprint ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1974), pp. 208–9; S. Lewis Johnson, "The First Epistle to the Corinthians," in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, ed. Charles F. Pfeiffer and Everett F. Harrison (Chicago: Moody Press, 1962), p. 1247; and Fish, "Women Speaking in the Church," p. 246–49.

<sup>79</sup>Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), p. 406.

<sup>80</sup>Harold R. Holmyard III, "Does 1 Corinthians 11:2–16 Refer to Woman Praying and Prophesying in Church?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 154 (October–December 1997): 461–72.

most likely that chapters 11–14 are dealing with problems in the Corinthian church related to public worship. Certainly, this is plain in vv. 17–34 where Paul takes up the matter of abuse of the Lord’s Supper and chapters 12–14 with the issue of spiritual gifts. There is no indication in the text of 11:2–16 that Paul has in view some sort of private gathering of believers. Since many, if not most, early churches met in homes, it is difficult to understand how there would have been a clear distinction between official and unofficial meetings of the assembly. Verse 13 would seem to settle the issue: “Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God *with her head* uncovered?” Paul must be speaking of the public assembly, for it is impossible to believe that Paul would require the head covering for the woman in her private prayers.<sup>81</sup>

- H. Probably the best solution to the seeming conflict between 1 Corinthians 11:5 and 14:33 is that Paul means “women are to keep silent in the churches” with reference to the topic under discussion in the context, which is prophesying and judging prophecies.<sup>82</sup> Though this view is held by numerous scholars, it has received its most extensive defense by Carson and Thiselton.<sup>83</sup> The discussion begins in v. 29, where Paul says, “Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment.” This is followed in vv. 30–33a with an elaboration on the first part of v. 29 (“Let two or three prophets speak”). It may be that v. 33b (“as in all the churches of the saints”) goes with v. 34 (“as in all the churches of the saints, the women are to keep silent in the churches”) as in the ESV, HCSB and NET BIBLE. In any case, beginning in v. 33b or 34, Paul elaborates on the judging of prophecies that he had mentioned in the last part of v. 29, “let the others pass judgment.” Paul’s point is that in the church when there was the weighing and evaluating of prophetic utterances, women should remain silent because they are not to be involved in judging prophecies. As Grudem observes: “This understanding of 1 Corinthians 14:33–36 is consistent with the teachings of the rest of the New Testament on appropriate roles for women in the church. Speaking out and judging prophecies before the assembled congregation is a governing role over the assembled church, and Paul reserves that role for men.”<sup>84</sup>

## VI. Conclusions

- A. Evangelicalism, including the missional and emergent churches, has demonstrated a tendency to overthrow the traditional roles for men and women in the ministry of the church. 1 Corinthians 11:3 is one of the key texts in the ongoing debate between egalitarians and complementarians and will undoubtedly remain so. It sets forth the authoritative place of men in the church and as such is complimentary to other texts, such as 1 Timothy 2:12, “I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man.” These texts do not mean, of course, they women are forbidden to exercise their

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<sup>81</sup>Fee, *Corinthians*, p. 498, n. 22.

<sup>82</sup>Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2004), pp. 78–79. Available as a pdf at [http://www.cbmw.org/images/onlinebooks/evangelical\\_feminism.pdf](http://www.cbmw.org/images/onlinebooks/evangelical_feminism.pdf).

<sup>83</sup>D. A. Carson, “‘Silent in the Churches’: On the Role of Women in 1 Corinthians 14:33b–36,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991), pp. 133–47; Thiselton, *Corinthians*, pp. 1146–61. Also Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective*, pp. 188–94; Fung, “Ministry in the New Testament,” pp. 196–197.

<sup>84</sup>*Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth*, p. 79.

spiritual gifts. As we have seen, Paul allows for women to pray and prophesy in the public assembly of the church. But Paul does regulate the demeanor in which women pray and prophesy so as not to compromise the principle of the spiritual leadership of men. What is at question is not *that* women are permitted to pray and prophesy in public but *how* they are do it. That is, are they must do it with the dress and demeanor that signify their affirmation of the headship of the men who are called to lead the church. In Corinth that meant wearing a head covering. A head covering in Paul's day communicated a submissive demeanor and feminine adornment.<sup>85</sup>

- B. As a cessationist I believe the gift of prophecy is no longer available in the church today. As such that would eliminate from consideration one aspect (prophecy) of the specific issue with which Paul was dealing. But what about other areas of ministry? The principle of our text still controls. Women may participate in public worship, but they must do so with a humble demeanor that is at the same time submissive to male leadership. In order to determine what roles are open to women, one needs to correlate our text with others we have mentioned, such as 1 Timothy 2:12. This requires careful judgment and, admittedly, the decision between what is and what is not permitted is not always perfectly clear, but the general boundaries are fairly obvious. For help in making these determinations, I would recommend looking at the lists drawn up by Wayne Grudem of activities in the church and parachurch organizations which are permitted for women and others which should be restricted to men following the principles of complementarianism.<sup>86</sup> Much helpful information on these issues is available at the CBMW website ([www.cbmw.org](http://www.cbmw.org)).

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<sup>85</sup>Thomas R. Schreiner, "Head Coverings, Prophecies and the Trinity: 1 Corinthians 11: 2–16," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991), p. 132.

<sup>86</sup>*Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth*, pp. 84–101.