

SYNERGOI

For we are GOD'S Fellow Workers... (1 Cor 3:9)

θεου' γὰρ ἔσμεν συνεργοὶ

A LETTER FOR LEADERS

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Of Headship and 1 Corinthians Eleven – Part 2 [Article #4]

The argument about the meaning of the Greek word for “head” is important to clarify. Advocates for the sense in 1 Cor 11 of head as “source [of life] or origin” are on good ground as far as they go! Let’s take a minute to set out the record.

The Use of κεφαλή (head) in Greek

I am following TDNT in my presentation but have done other work on the use of κεφαλη.

Outside the NT the Greek uses head/ κεφαλη as

1. “what is first, supreme, or extreme” – such as the head of a man or animal, the point, the top, the end, the point of departure; the prow of a ship, the top of a pillar, the mouth of a river, the source of a river, the start of an epoch; the conclusion to a speech [as, “to cap something off”].
2. “what is prominent, outstanding or determinative” – a man’s head as the first and chief members which determines all the others.
3. representative of “the whole man, the person.”
4. NOT in secular usage for “the head of a society”; the first occurrence of this sense appears in the Gk OT (LXX = Septuagint).
5. LXX: accords with general Gk use, **but** also uses for “the head or ruler of a society” (Deut 28:13, 43, 44); Is 9:13, 14 uses head/tail as reference to the great and small among the people and in v 14 “head” is used interchangeably with “ruler”; for head, ruler, leader of others or society in Judges 10:18; 11:11; further note, LXX does often substituted alternative Gk words for the Hebrew “head” ראש [rosh]. These words include ἀρχή, ἄρχων, ἀρχηγός, ἡγέομαι, ἡγεμών, προηγέομαι, κορυφή, χιλιάρχος [beginning/ first, ruler, prince, to lead, leader, to lead the way, top/summit/extremity, commander of a thousand]
6. TDNT on the use of κεφαλή [head] in 1 Corinthians 11: “*The being of woman as δόξα, [glory], and the indirectly of man as εἰκὼν καὶ δόξα, is explained by the fact that the origin and raison d’être of woman are to be found in man. ... Woman is the reflection of man to the degree that in her created being she points to man, and only with and through him to God. In this relation of man and woman we are dealing with the foundations of their creaturehood. In formal terms, we have a determination of their being and not just of the mode of their historical manifestation. ... Not merely as a Christian, nor historically, but ontologically and by nature woman lives of man and for him. If this is true, the use of κεφαλή [head] rather than κύριος [lord] in v. 3 is not accidental. ... He is using the term κεφαλή as it is familiar to him, and in respect of one element at least*

its roots is in the LXX. κεφαλη implies one who stands over another in the sense of being the ground of his being. Paul could have used ἀρχή [beginning] if there had not been a closer personal relationship in κεφαλή.

We may thus understand the passage. Paul presupposes that man and woman are distinct by nature. This is rooted in the fact that woman is by nature referred to man as her basis (in a twofold sense). This distinction is expressed in the veiling of her κεφαλή, in the non-exposure of her head before God and Christ, whose presence in worship is indicated by angels. It would be for Paul an abandonment of the foundations of creation if charismatically gifted women – the is to such in contrast to 1 C.14:33ff. – were to pray or prophesy with their heads uncovered like men. It would an offense against their head (in the twofold sense [physical head, men]_ if they were not to cover themselves. As the Corinthians themselves may see, the necessity of covering is indicated by nature or custom (φύσις), which regards long hair as suitable in women for a covering.”

Some salient points from Schlier in TWNT:

- a) Paul does not use κύριος (lord) but κεφαλη (head); the head is “one who stands over another in the sense of being the ground of his being,” so that, “ontologically [in essence of being] and by nature woman lives of man and for him.”
- b) Paul does use κεφαλη but could have used ἀρχη [beginning]. The fundamental sense of ἀρχη is primacy, whether in time (beginning, first) or in rank (power, dominion, office).
- c) Paul is dealing with women gifted for ministry and therefore able to exercise their gifts as long as they are not out of order. [The same condition applies to men in ministry.] 1 Cor 14: 34, 35 concerns women not gifted for public ministry. Nevertheless, in Paul appeals in both places to the same ontological foundation in order to advance his argument where it concerns women. There is an order in which the primacy of men is an important and ordering factor and cannot be set aside. [When Paul sets disorderly men in their places he does not use the same argument as he uses concerning women.]

Paul’s concern is for the glory of God in worship – “because of the angels” who are present in worship. Paul believes that woman is the glory of man and as such it is the glory of man that should be hidden in the worship of God. In this passage there is clearly the sense of source or beginning for the word “head.” This is Paul’s rationale for expecting the woman to bring glory not disrepute to the man (her husband??). The woman originates from the man. This is a version of “the right of priority,” primacy if you like. While it is true that vv 11, 12 establish another principle, it still remains that the man is never said to be the glory of the woman. Fee’s contention that this is not subordination is to miss the sense of sub-ordination. It is not subjugation [to bring somebody, especially a people or nation, under the control of another, for example, by military conquest, *Encarta® World English Dictionary*] but subordination [the assignment of somebody or something to a position of secondary importance, status, or rank, *Encarta® World English Dictionary*]. In other words somebody came first, and somebody came second!

As such #2 ought to cue off #1. There are only two ordinal numbers in view here!

Fee agrees that some of the Corinthians were blurring the differences between the genders. Paul’s remediation is grounded in the order of creation. Both male and female were created in the image of God [this establishes equality; this is implicit in v. 7]. But the male is [ordinal-ly] the glory of God [by virtue of being first from God] and the woman is the glory of the man [by virtue of her being fashioned from the man and as the man’s helpmeet].

To bring order, one must recognize the God-created order of things. To be continued.... Pastor Phil

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