

1 Corinthians 11:2–16

Philip B. Payne © 2018 Payne Loving Trust. All rights reserved.

(page numbers) are from *Man and Woman, One in Christ*, \$19.99 at www.pbpayne.com

1. **There is widespread agreement among complementarians and egalitarians that Paul here affirms women praying and prophesying in church.**
2. **Is there a garment head-covering custom in all churches?** v.16 “We have no such custom.”
3. **What was disgraceful?** Men put a garment over their heads as a sign of reverence. Abundant graphic evidence shows it was not disgraceful for a woman to be in public without a garment over her head. Vv. 14–15 identify what the shameful head coverings are: “Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, 15 but that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering.” (141-73)
4. **1st key cultural insight: women’s hair let down loose was regarded as disgraceful in Paul’s day and symbolized “undisciplined sexuality.”** (147–166)
 - Numbers 5 “bitter water” ordeal: a priest lets down the hair of an accused adulteress, and if she is convicted, he cuts it off.
5. **2nd key cultural insight: it was disgraceful for men to display effeminate hair.** (141–46)
 - Livy 39.13.10–12, 15 says of Dionysiac initiation rites “There were more lustful practices among men with one another than among women... men like the women ... effeminate”
6. **10 key reasons favor interpreting “head” (κεφαλή) as “source” rather than “authority.”** (115–39)
 - The standard Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible hardly ever uses the word “head” (κεφαλή) when the Hebrew word for “head” meant leader. (119–21)
 - It is simply not true that “authority over” was a well-established meaning of “head” (κεφαλή) in Greek literature. (121–23)
 - “Source” is an established meaning for “head” (κεφαλή) listed from the earliest Greek lexicons to the present. (123-28)
 - The items listed in 1 Cor 11:3 are not listed in a descending or ascending order of authority, but they are listed chronologically: man came from Christ’s creative work, woman came from “the man,” Christ came from God in the incarnation. (129)
 - “Source” fits better than “authority” as the meaning of κεφαλή in “the Christ is [ἔστιν] the “head” (κεφαλή) of every man” (1 Cor. 11:3). (129–30)
 - “Source” fits better than “authority” as the meaning of “head” (κεφαλή) in “the man [with an article] is “head” (κεφαλή) of woman.” (130–31)
 - “Source” fits better than “authority” as the meaning of “head” (κεφαλή) in “God [with an article] is the “head” (κεφαλή) of the Christ.” (131–36)
 - This passage discusses disgraceful head-covering practices in worship, not hierarchical roles. The only reference to authority affirms the woman’s authority. (141–87)
 - This passage says nothing about man’s authority but rather affirms woman’s authority. Paul recognizes her authority to pray and prophecy in 11:5, her authority over her own

head in 11:10, and her equal standing with man in 11:11–12. (181–98)

- Much early Greek commentary on 11:3 specifically interprets κεφαλή to mean “source.” Cyril of Alexandria’s *De recta fide ad Arcadium et Marinam* 5².63E: “The source [ἀρχή] of man is the Creator God [τὸν ποιήσαντα Θεόν]. Thus we say that “the head [κεφαλή] of every man is Christ,” because he was made [πεποιήται] through him and brought forth to birth.... And the head [κεφαλή] of woman is man, because she was taken from his flesh and has him as her source [ἀρχή]. Likewise, the head [κεφαλή] of Christ is God, because He is from Him according to nature.” Theodore of Mopsuestia, Saint Basil, Athanasius, Eusebius, Photius, Ambrosiaster say “head” means “source.” (136–37)

7. **Verse 3 lays out the underlying logic for the whole passage:** Men in the church should show respect to Christ (their source since He created them) by not repudiating the way He created them as men. Therefore, men should not display long effeminately styled hair. Women should show respect to man since woman had her source in the man, Adam (repeated in v. 8, 9, 12). Therefore, women should not symbolize repudiation of their marriage vows by letting their hair down loose. (115–17)
8. **Paul begins v. 11 with the standard word for “breaking off a discussion and emphasizing what is important”** (BDAG 826 c). In every occurrence in Paul’s letters, “Nevertheless” (πλὴν) points to the matter of his central concern, and in each case it indicates a change in perspective from what went before. “Nevertheless, woman is not separate from man, nor is man separate from woman in the Lord” in verse 11 expresses the theological basis for Paul’s judgment in 11:5 that women as well as men may pray and prophesy in the church. (189–90)
9. **The central question about the meaning of verse 11 regards the word χωρίς (“separate from”).** “Independent” is not listed regarding persons in standard Greek dictionaries. It “adds a nuance which goes beyond the adverb χωρίς” (Thiselton). Nor is interdependence distinctively “in the Lord.” (190–95)
10. A translation like, **“Nevertheless, woman is not separate from man, nor is man separate from woman in the Lord”** fits all but four of Paul’s 16 uses of this word. Most important, it fits this context perfectly. It affirms that, in spite of the created differences between man and woman (which should be upheld in this life), Paul’s key point is that the barriers that separate man and woman have been overcome in Christ. (189–95)
11. **Verse 12 further argues for no gender separation in Christ since both men and women should respect the other as their source.** “For just as woman is from man, so also man comes through woman, and all this is from God.” (195–98)
12. **Verses 11–12 clarify that Paul is not attempting to derive a hierarchy of authority of men over women** from his “head” statements in verse 3 or excluding women from being in “the image of God” in verse 7. (189–98)
13. **This passage, therefore, affirms women leading worship in prayer and prophecy** and justifies this since “woman is not separate from man, nor is man separate from woman in the Lord.” It applies the Gal 3:28 principle of no male-female division to church leadership.