

WHAT WINGER PRESENTLY GETS WRONG:

THE HEAD COVERING DEBATES (1 COR 11)

[23 January 2023]

Is 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 about authoritative male headship, or is that interpretation a mirage, without a single express word in the text to support it, and in actual conflict with what Paul writes?

This article responds to Mike Winger's video 'Women in Ministry Part 10: All The Head Covering Debates (1 Cor 11)'¹

If you're in a hurry, click www.bit.ly/3wSryx7 for a quick summary.

You can see our online or pdf articles on other videos by Mike at www.terranwilliams.com/articles/. Or use these links:

- *[Part 2 \(Genesis\)](http://www.bit.ly/40lo9oh) — www.bit.ly/40lo9oh*
- *[Part 3 \(OT Women\)](http://www.bit.ly/3jAjCNX) — www.bit.ly/3jAjCNX*
- *[Part 4 \(NT Women\) part A](http://www.bit.ly/3JDVRiB) — www.bit.ly/3JDVRiB*
- *[Part 4 \(NT Women\) part B](http://www.bit.ly/3X08GXx) — www.bit.ly/3X08GXx*
- *[Part 8 \(Meaning of Head\)](http://www.bit.ly/3RwliET) — www.bit.ly/3RwliET*
- *[Part 9 \(Wives submit\)](http://www.bit.ly/3l8CmVv) — www.bit.ly/3l8CmVv*
- *[Part 10 \(1 Cor 11, Head Covering\)](http://www.bit.ly/3Y2Zp2l) — www.bit.ly/3Y2Zp2l*

Still to come: Part 5 (Female Apostles), Part 11 (1 Cor 14, Silencing Women), Part 12 (1 Tim 2).

Please do not misunderstand our title 'What Winger Presently Gets Wrong' as implying any personal criticism of Mike. On the contrary, by including his name in the title, we are acknowledging the prominence of the ministry to which the Lord has called him. His Bible teaching is often of good quality and of much benefit to many people. He is a valued brother in Christ. But on this topic of Women in Ministry we are convinced that he has made mistakes and has misread Scripture.

Of course, Mike tries hard to think clearly and teach biblically. But if you think that Mike consistently succeeds in that aim, this article will give you reasons to reconsider, as will our two-part article responding to his video about Women Leaders in the New Testament, at www.bit.ly/3YPVNRr

Who are we, and why are we responding to Mike Winger?

Andrew Bartlett is based in the UK. He is the author of [Men and Women in Christ: Fresh Light from the Biblical Texts](#) (2019). He has been studying Scripture for nearly 60 years. In his day job as an international arbitrator and judge, he specializes in dispassionate analysis of texts,

¹ The video can be found on Mike's own site biblethinker.org and on YouTube.

evidence and arguments. He has a degree in theology and has served in lay leadership in several churches.

Terran Williams is a South African pastor-teacher, with a ministry of planting and nurturing churches. He is the author of **How God Sees Women: The End of Patriarchy** (2022) and a number of other books.

‘Complementarianism’ subordinates women under men’s authority in the church and in the home. When Andrew and Terran wrote their books, Andrew was a member of a complementarian church and Terran had just completed his long tenure as a leading pastor of a complementarian church. They each engaged with the leading scholarly complementarian works and independently concluded that God’s word does not subordinate women under men.

Mike Winger started releasing his video teachings on ‘Women in Ministry’ soon after Terran’s book was published. Because Mike’s lengthy videos have been watched by many thousands of people, he has emerged as one of the world’s most influential complementarian teachers. On reviewing Mike’s videos, Andrew and Terran found that there were substantial errors in Mike’s research, reasoning, and handling of Scripture.

Since the ordinary believer is more likely to get their information about Scripture from free online resources than from scholarly books, Andrew and Terran decided to team up and write some freely available responses to Mike’s teaching. Terran credits Andrew with doing the lion’s share of the work.

We love Mike’s heart. He repeatedly indicates his readiness to change his mind if solid reasons are put to him. He says: ‘If you’re a scholar who’s really studied in this area and you want to give me pushback, I really would like to read it now. If I’m wrong, I want to know it. Love to see that pushback.’ [Part 8 video, 0hr6mins] We commend Mike for his openness, and we thank him for his invitation. We are hopeful that his engaging with our feedback will result in a good conversation in which we all make progress in our understanding of God’s word.

If you find that we have made some errors of our own, please write and tell us, so that we can make any needed corrections. You can email us at terranwill -at- gmail.com.² Please put these words in the subject-line: Winger Part 10.

² You’ll need to replace “ -at- ” with “@”.

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The big picture of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16

In 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 the apostle Paul gives instructions for men and women who are praying aloud and prophesying. He wants their conduct to be honorable, rather than shameful. However, the detailed interpretation of his instructions is a matter of controversy.

Paul's concluding statement (verse 16) is helpful for understanding the big picture:

'And if anyone thinks to be contentious about this, we do not have such a custom, nor do the churches of God.' (our translation)

Verse 16 tells us that the custom that was being followed at Corinth, when men and women prayed and prophesied, was unique to Corinth. They were doing something differently from all other churches.

The reason we have given our own translation of verse 16 is that around one third of English versions contain a deliberate mistranslation of this verse. They change the word 'such' (Greek *toioutos* = such, of this kind) to 'other'. For example, the version which Mike uses in his Part 10 video says:

'But if one is inclined to be contentious, we have no ^[a]other practice, nor have the churches of God.' (NASB1995)³

The translators know that this is not what Paul's Greek says. They provide a footnote [a], which acknowledges that Paul's own word does not mean 'other'; it means 'such'. So, the Greek word *toioutos* properly translates as 'such', which means 'of this kind'; but the deliberate mistranslation 'other' means 'of a different kind'.

In our view, changing Paul's text to say the opposite of his actual word is a sign that the translators have not correctly understood Paul's train of thought. But this feature of English versions is a vivid illustration of the magnitude of the difficulties that interpreters have had with understanding Paul's meaning.

There are two major areas of disagreement:

- Some say that his practical instructions are mainly about covering or not covering the head with a garment of some kind, perhaps a veil. But others say that his instructions are all about suitable and unsuitable hairstyles.
- Some say that the underlying theme of his instructions is the maintenance of male authority over women. But others say that there is nothing at all in this passage about male authority.

These two areas of controversy are not firmly tied together. Those who believe Paul is writing about veiling of women may or may not also believe it is about male authority. Those who believe Paul is writing only about hairstyles may or may not hold to a male-authority interpretation.

It would be idle to pretend that this passage is easy to interpret. Mike's attempt at interpreting it in his video goes on for 6 hours 45 minutes.

The central difficulty arises from the fact that the original writer (Paul) and the original listeners (the Corinthians) knew what Paul was talking about because they had full knowledge of the practical situation that Paul was addressing: he did not need to tell them what they already knew. And if they had any questions about his meaning, the letter-carrier would explain it to them. But our knowledge of their situation is patchy at best. And we can no longer ask the letter-carrier. We have to try to draw inferences from what is said in the letter and from historical and cultural information about Corinth. Interpreters therefore need to proceed with particular caution, not claiming more certainty than is really justified.

³ We will often refer to or quote the NASB1995 in this article. We do this simply because it is the English version that Mike uses for his Part 10 video, not because we have any preference for that version.

We respectfully suggest it is neither wise nor appropriate for translators and interpreters, however good their intentions, to change the words to make them say something materially different from what is there in Paul's Greek. We shall see in due course that this is what Mike does with verse 10.

Is 1 Corinthians 11 significant for women's ministry?

What is the significance of this passage for the scope of women's ministry?

- First, on any view, Paul is affirming women and men praying aloud and prophesying in each other's presence.
- Second, on any view, Paul is placing no restriction on the *scope* of women's participation in vocal ministry.
- Third, though men and women are sexually differentiated in creation (verses 7-9), the spiritual unity of men and women in Christ is expressed in the fact that men and women are together leading in worship by praying and prophesying (verses 4-5, 11-12). (We explain this further at the end of this article.)

Paul does not say here that women should not prophesy to men; nor does he say that they should not lead men in prayer.

Since in this passage Paul places no limitation on the scope of women's participation, at first sight it seems strange that it is keenly debated in the discussions on women's ministry.

The only reason it is debated in that context is that complementarian Bible teachers use it to support their idea of 'male headship', by which they mean that men or husbands are placed by God in authority over women or wives. That idea is then imported into discussions of women's ministry in order to help justify restrictions on what women may do.

Mike's position

As we noted in our response to Mike's Part 8 video, Mike is enthusiastic about the idea of authoritative male headship.

However, Mike is sensitive to how it sounds when someone teaches that husbands (or men) have authority over wives (or women). He says:

'I prefer the term that the husband has a higher degree of authority in relation to his wife.'
(1hr42mins)

This unusual circumlocution is a useful reminder that Mike is not talking about absolute authority or domineering authority. However, it does not change the substance of what Mike is talking about: according to him, a husband has God-given authority over his wife, so that there

is a hierarchy of authority, in which the husband is the higher authority and the wife is under that authority.

His conclusion from 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 is that 'male headship', by which he means one-way male authority over women or wives, is a biblical teaching and a transcultural reality that applies to all cultures (6hr37mins).

However, Mike is equivocal on whether his conclusion applies to men and women generally or applies only to husbands and wives. He says he is 'still on the fence' as regards whether in 1 Corinthians 11:3 Paul is referring to man and woman or to husband and wife (4hr0mins). He is there confronted with a dangerous dilemma, which we will explain near the end, after we have shown why his interpretation is mistaken.

At this stage in Mike's series on Women in Ministry, we do not yet know in detail how Mike will use his understanding of 'male headship' as justification for restrictions on women's ministry. But his basic idea is that the concept of authoritative male headship is reflected in a requirement that church elders be men (6hr38mins, 6hr43mins).

(On the subject of qualifications for elders, we refer readers to our response to Mike's Part 4 video on women leaders in the New Testament, where we show that Mike's reading of 1 Timothy 3:1-7 is superficial and contains elementary errors.)

Mike's analysis

Because of the length of Mike's Part 10 video, we will respond only to the particular parts of it which directly bear on his overall conclusion that 1 Corinthians 11 supports his understanding of male headship as God-given authority over women or wives. For more wide-ranging discussion of what Paul is teaching in this passage, we refer readers to our books.⁴

Mike identifies 15 questions about the passage. He classifies some of them as 'central'. He states that, of the 'central' issues, only numbers 1, 2, 3 and 7 are needed for the women's ministry debate. That is because he sees those particular issues as being the ones which need to be answered in a particular way in order to support his idea of authoritative male headship.

#1 is whether this passage belongs in the Bible. Mike says that it does. We agree.

#2 is whether all of the passage consists of Paul's views or whether it is a mixture of statements by opponents and Paul's refutations. Mike judges that it is all Paul's views. We think Mike is probably correct about that, and we will assume that position. While there are some serious

⁴ Andrew Bartlett, *Men and Women in Christ: Fresh Light from the Biblical Texts*, chapters 7 and 8; Terran Williams, *How God Sees Women: The End of Patriarchy*, chapter 6. We note that the longest section of Mike's video (85 minutes, commencing at 1:50:41) is his survey of cultural customs concerning head coverings, where he says that he is not confident of his conclusions (1hr51mins).

arguments about it that deserve discussion, we will not lengthen this response by reviewing them.

We therefore say no more about #1 and #2.

#3 is about the metaphorical meaning of 'head' (kephalē) in this passage. We agree that this is a central issue for Mike's concept of authoritative male headship: does 'head' mean 'authority over'?

#7 asks 'What is Paul's point about the order and the purpose in the creation of man and woman in verses 8-9'? Mike sees these verses as supporting his view that the passage is about maintaining male authority. He believes that other views on the significance of the creation order demonstrably fail.

#15 is his concluding question: What does 1 Corinthians 11 mean for the Women in Ministry Series? In the concluding part of his discussion (6hr37-39mins), Mike identifies four points which he regards as evidence that male headship is about authority over women:

- (1) verse 3, where Paul uses the 'head' metaphor;
- (2) creation's order in verses 8-9;
- (3) the whole of the passage is about maintaining male headship when men and women pray and prophesy;
- (4) verse 10 shows that the whole reason why head coverings mattered was because they were a symbol of male authority.

These four points can be boiled down to two propositions:

- The foundational proposition is that in verse 3 'head' means 'authority over'.
- The related proposition is that the whole passage is about using head coverings (or hair) in a way that maintains male authority, as seen particularly in verses 8-9 and in verse 10.

It is worth noticing that these two propositions stand or fall together. If in verse 3 'head' does not mean 'authority over', then it makes no sense to interpret the passage as being about maintaining male authority. Conversely, if the reasoning from verse 4 onwards does not fit the idea that the passage is about maintaining male authority, then verse 3 cannot be about authority either.

We will see that neither proposition is well-founded. When we look closely at Paul's words, both propositions are inconsistent with what Paul writes.

Mike's misplaced reliance on previous videos

In 1 Corinthians 11:3, Paul writes:

‘But I want you to realize that the Messiah is head (*kephalē*) of every man, and the man is head (*kephalē*) of woman, and God is head (*kephalē*) of the Messiah.’ (our literal translation)

In his video, Mike addresses, as his question #3, what does ‘head’ (*kephalē*) mean in this passage? (1hr37mins to 1hr50mins). His answer is ‘authority over’.

Mike has a reason for spending only 3% of his time on this fundamental issue. The reason is that he relies on the ground that he has already covered in his Part 8 video on male headship, together with his Part 9 video on wives’ submission.

But there are two major problems with Mike’s reliance on his previous videos. The first problem arises from the major errors in those videos. The second problem is even more fundamental: it arises from his faulty method of reasoning.

Errors in the Part 8 and Part 9 videos

Concerning 1 Corinthians 11:3, he claims in his Part 10 video:

‘Even if *kephalē* can mean source, which I doubt it does, then it still seems to carry the connotation of authority.’ (1hr 48 mins).

He says that because of his previous videos.

According to Mike’s belief, in Part 8 he demonstrated that his view of ‘head’ as ‘authority over’ was supported (a) by common medical thought in the first century, (b) by Paul’s usage of the ‘head’ metaphor, which was misrepresented by egalitarian scholars, (c) unanimously by church history, and (d) overwhelmingly by Greek lexicons.

However, in our response to his Part 8 video, we showed that (a) Mike’s portrayal of medical thought was oversimplified, (b) he misread what some egalitarian scholars said about Paul’s ‘head’ metaphors and did not adequately examine Paul’s usage, (c) his picture of church history was misleading, and (d) his analysis of lexicons was flawed.

The understanding that *kephalē* can be a metaphor for ‘source’ is not a recent invention. We included citations of early Greek commentators (Cyril of Alexandria, Eusebius, and others) who understood *kephalē* in 1 Corinthians 11:3 as a metaphor for ‘source’, not ‘authority over’. And we also listed 15 Greek lexicons, from the 12th century to the 21st century, which give the metaphorical sense ‘source’ for *kephalē*.

In his Part 9 video, Mike interpreted Paul’s head-and-body metaphor in Ephesians 5:23 as being about a husband’s authority over his wife. But in our response we showed that Paul’s head-and-body metaphor in Ephesians 5 does not include an idea of male authority.

Mike arrived at his incorrect view of Paul’s metaphor by starting his unsatisfactory exposition of Ephesians 5 in the middle of one of Paul’s sentences, without considering the context, and by overlooking multiple indicators of the tenor (the meaning) of the metaphor, including Paul’s own explicit explanation of the point which Paul applies to the husband (‘savior of the body’).

Faulty method of reasoning

In our responses to Mike's Part 8 and Part 9 videos, we noted the variability of metaphors. We saw that Paul used similar metaphors with varying meanings even within the same letter.

Even if Paul had used a head-and-body metaphor in Ephesians 5 to signify a husband's authority over his wife, that would not prove his intended meaning in 1 Corinthians 11:3.

There are material differences between Paul's letter to the Ephesians and his first letter to the Corinthians. The Corinthian letter was written a few years earlier. In 11:2-16 Paul addresses a unique issue in the Corinthian church, which is not mentioned in the letter to the Ephesians. And the metaphor in 11:3 is not a head-and-body metaphor. There are three 'heads' in verse 3 but there is no mention of bodies. Whatever one thinks of Ephesians 5, the 'head' metaphor in 1 Corinthians 11 needs to be examined on its own terms and in its own context.

Mike's reliance on his previous videos is misplaced, because the intended metaphorical meaning of 'head' in verse 3 can only be determined by looking closely at what Paul writes here, and Mike did not undertake that exercise in his Part 8 or Part 9 videos.

For this reason, his approach to 1 Corinthians 11 is methodologically unsound. His view that 'head' means 'authority over' is not derived from examination of 1 Corinthians 11. Instead, it is his assumed starting point, before he starts to consider Paul's train of thought in this passage. He then sets about interpreting the meaning of the passage, based on this predetermined idea.

The fruits of this mistaken approach are precisely what should logically be expected. As we shall see below, at point after point Mike's interpretation does not fit Paul's words in his letter. But Mike does not discover or consider these difficulties because he has already decided that 'head' means 'authority over'.

1 Corinthians 7 is in conflict with Mike's interpretation

Just a few pages earlier in Paul's letter, in strong and revolutionary terms, Paul has affirmed the equality of men and women in personal relations (1 Corinthians 7). We looked at that in some detail in our response to Mike's Part 9 video, because it is the longest passage in the New Testament concerning the relations of men and women as regards marriage.

In the New Testament, the ordinary word for authority is *exousia*. The related verb is *exousiazō*, which means 'to have authority over'.

In 1 Corinthians 7:4-5, Paul writes:

'For the wife does not have authority over (*exousiazō*) her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over (*exousiazō*) his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer;' (ESV)

Paul is there teaching the equal authority and joint decision-making of husband and wife.

Yet Mike believes that in chapter 11 Paul is saying that men or husbands have one-way authority over women or wives. If so, Paul is contradicting himself.

That is not an acceptable analysis. Paul's writings sometimes fill out, develop or qualify things he has written previously, but they do not flatly contradict what he has written previously.

In 1 Corinthians 11, from verse 2 to verse 16, nothing is said *expressly* about man's authority over woman, whether using the term *exousia* or any synonym or similar word. Yet Mike interprets 1 Corinthians 11 in a way which sets up male authority by supposed implication, contrary to the *express words* of 1 Corinthians 7. That is not a sound approach to understanding Scripture.

Mike spoke about 1 Corinthians 7 in his Part 9 video. We saw that his interpretation of it was in conflict with Paul's express words.

Mike has not provided a plausible answer to the inconsistency between 1 Corinthians 7 and his interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11.

The order of the couplets in verse 3 is consistent with 'source' and inconsistent with 'authority over'

1 Corinthians 11:3 presents three pairs of 'head' relationships: Messiah–man, man–woman, God–Messiah. We will call these 'couplets'.

Mike states that verse 3 is 'the overarching principle that drives the whole passage', the 'overarching principle for the whole teaching on head coverings'; 'all of Paul's concerns are going to flow from this' (0hr15-16mins, and Mike's notes). We agree, as do commentators of all persuasions. Verse 3 is the theological keynote statement which undergirds the argument which Paul then presents.

If Paul were thinking in hierarchical terms, involving a structure of authority relationships, it would be natural for him to state the couplets in verse 3 in a hierarchical order:

God » Messiah;

Messiah » every man;

man » woman.

But he does not. His order is:

Messiah » every man;

man » woman;

God » Messiah.

We need to remember here that 'head' (*kephalē*) was used metaphorically in more than one way in Greek.

No attentive listener in Corinth, hearing Paul's words in verse 3 for the first time, would think of a hierarchy of authorities. If Paul meant to convey a hierarchy of authorities, this order of couplets is illogical. Worse than that, it would be perverse, for its effect would be to divert his listeners away from his true intention. It is an immediate signal that Paul's metaphor does not connote 'authority over'.

We note, however, that if Paul is thinking in terms of sources, then the couplets are in a chronological order.

The first two couplets are about creation; the third couplet is about redemption:

(1) The Messiah is the head of every man:

Christ was the agent of creation, including of every man, 1 Corinthians 8:6 ('one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist'⁵); also John 1:3; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2; Genesis 1:26.

(2) The man is head of woman:

Woman was taken out of man, 1 Corinthians 11:8; also Genesis 2:21-22.

(3) God is head of the Messiah:

Christ came from God to redeem us, 1 Corinthians 1:30 ('Christ Jesus ... our righteousness, holiness and redemption'⁶); also 15:45-49; John 3:16-17; Galatians 4:4-5.

While the three pairs of relationships differ from each other, the common feature of all three is that there is a source relationship, and this appears to be what Paul's 'head' metaphor is picking up.

In sum, the order of the couplets in verse 3 is such that 'head' meaning 'source' reads naturally, whereas 'head' meaning 'authority over' is jarring. The order is a timeline, not a chain of command.

This does not mean that the bare term 'source' must be the exact, correct interpretation of Paul's *kephalē* metaphor, as a matter of certainty. There are other interpretive options and nuances which we are not discussing in this response. For present purposes the more important point is that 'authority over' does not fit the order in Paul's text.

Despite the great length of his video, Mike does not mention this difficulty for his theory, still less answer it. That is probably because, before he started to interpret 1 Corinthians 11, he had already decided that 'head' in verse 3 means 'authority over'.

⁵ ESV.

⁶ ESV.

However, Mike does raise a particular objection to ‘head’ meaning ‘source’ in verse 3, an objection which he bases on verse 12. We answer that objection in Postscript (2) below.

Before moving on, it is worth noticing that the third couplet completes a circle, in the sense that it ends with the Messiah, where the first couplet began (the point of the first couplet is that *the Messiah* is head of every man; the point of the third couplet is that God is head of *the Messiah*). So, there is an additional implication. Since, according to the third couplet, God is the head or source of the Messiah, it follows that God is also the ultimate source of every man in the first couplet, and of the woman in the second couplet. In other words, the third couplet is telling us that all these things (the creation of every man in the first couplet and of women in the second couplet, together with their redemption by the Messiah in the third couplet) are from God.

Lack of express mention of the authority of Christ over man, man over woman, or God over Christ

Paul says he wants his readers to ‘know’ or ‘understand’ his keynote statement (v 3). Since ‘head’ as a metaphor could be used in more than one way, Paul needs to signal clearly what he means by it.

If Mike is correct that this passage is about authoritative headship, then we would expect at least some mention of the authority of Christ over every man, of man over woman, and/or of God over Christ.

But Paul does not give any clear signal which points to the meaning ‘authority over’ for head. Instead, in this passage, Paul does not make any clear reference to the authority of Christ, of man, or of God.

There is, however, one express mention of ‘authority’ in the passage. It is in verse 10, where Paul’s express words say, ‘the woman ought to have authority’.

Mike argues for the word ‘authority’ in verse 10 to be taken to refer somehow to a man’s authority – and we will discuss his interpretation of verse 10 below – but *Paul’s express words say*, ‘the woman ought to have authority’.

So, as regards the express words of the passage, Paul does not mention the authority of any of the three persons who are heads in verse 3, whereas he does mention ‘authority’ that ‘the woman’ ought to have. In this respect, the text is the opposite of what should be expected if Mike is right.

This points against Mike’s interpretation.

How Paul uses the couplets in his argument

As we have noted, Mike affirms that verse 3 is ‘the overarching principle that drives the whole passage’.

If ‘head’ in verse 3 means ‘source’, then it is not hard to see how verse 3 drives Paul’s argument.

The chronological order in which the three couplets are stated in verse 3 is also the order in which they are used in Paul’s detailed argument.

The first couplet is ‘The Messiah is the head of every man’. In verse 4 the man is dishonoring Christ, his head (the source of his creation). Then in verses 8a and 9a, the basis for Paul’s statement that man is not from woman or for woman is the creation story in Genesis 2, where man was created by God (through Christ, as Paul has taught in 8:6) before woman.

The second couplet is ‘The man is head of woman’. In verses 5-6 the woman is dishonoring man, her head (the source of her creation). Then in verses 8b and 9b, the basis for Paul’s statement that woman is from man and for man is again the creation story, where woman was taken out of man and made to be his partner – the helper who corresponds to him (see Genesis 2:18).

The third couplet is ‘God is head of the Messiah’. To identify the usage of this third couplet, we need to ask the question: where are God and the Messiah mentioned together in Paul’s argument? The answer is: in verses 11 and 12.

Verse 11 says how things are with man and woman not in the first creation but ‘in the Lord’. The expression ‘the Lord’ refers to the Messiah, the Christ.⁷ Redeemed in Christ, man and woman are not independent of (or separate from) each other but are united in Christ.⁸ So, even though they are differentiated in creation, as redeemed in the Lord they serve in spiritual unity together, in praying and prophesying at Corinth.

It may seem a little strange at first sight that Paul appears to mix a spiritual argument from redemption or new creation (the spiritual union of man and woman ‘in the Lord’) in verse 11 with a biological argument from the first creation in verse 12a-b (literally, ‘For just as the woman is from the man, so also is the man through the woman’). But creation and redemption are linked together in the Genesis story which Paul has in mind. In Genesis 2, the Woman was taken out of Man, but in Genesis 3:15 the redeemer, the offspring who will crush the serpent’s head, was to come through the Woman. So, in verse 12b, ‘the Man through the Woman’ is

⁷ This meaning is very common in 1 Corinthians. For some examples, see 1 Corinthians 9:1, 2, 5, 14; 10:21, 22.

⁸ We have included ‘or separate from’ because ‘independent’ has connotations in English which are not carried by the Greek word ‘*choris*’. NASB1995 recognizes this in a footnote to verse 11, which says: ‘Lit *without*’.

more than a biological statement; it is also a reminder of where the redeeming Messiah comes from, the Man born of a woman. (This is in line with what Paul says in Galatians 4:4-5.)

Verse 12 ends with: 'And all these things are from God'. This covers both the primary reference and the additional implication of the third couplet. The creation of every man in the first couplet and of women in the second couplet, together with their redemption by the Messiah in the third couplet, are all from God.

So, we see that Paul uses each of the three source couplets in turn, in laying out his argument on how the Corinthians should present themselves honorably when praying and prophesying. This supports a 'sources' interpretation of verse 3. But in his long video Mike offers no comment on this structure.

Now let's compare Mike's interpretation. On the assumption that 'head' in verse 3 means 'authority over', do we see Paul using each of the couplets in turn?

Let's consider in particular the third couplet. If the third couplet is about the authority of God over Christ, in what way does that help to drive the passage? Where is it used in Paul's argument, whether expressly or by implication?

If 'head' means 'authority over', we look in vain for a use of the third couplet (God–Christ) anywhere in Paul's argument. We should expect to find Paul relying on *God's authority over Christ* in some way in order to explain or support his instructions. But he does not.

Our question for Mike is: please tell us how the third couplet of verse 3 functions in the detailed argument that Paul develops from verse 4 to verse 16. Where in verses 4-16 does Paul write about or allude to the authority of God over Christ?

Despite the great length of his video, he does not offer an answer to this important question. We have not seen it answered in any complementarian exposition of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16. The lack of an answer is a major problem for Mike's interpretation.

Before moving on from this aspect, we need to add that complementarian teachers have had some level of awareness that the third couplet ought to be used in Paul's argument. Since, on their understanding of 'head' as 'authority over', Paul makes no use of it in verses 4 to 16, they have invented their own uses for it, uses not mentioned by Paul.

Referring to 1 Corinthians 11:3, Grudem wrote in 1994:

'Just as God the Father has authority over the Son, though the two are equal in deity, so in a marriage, the husband has authority over the wife, though they are equal in personhood.'⁹

Hence, Mike says in his notes:

'Christ's submission to the Father is ongoing and wonderful. And, it models the relationship of husband and wife, which is central to the relationship of male and female.'

⁹ *Systematic Theology* (1994), 459.

This inventive interpretation led to major theological controversy, concerning the nature and mutual relations of God as three equal persons and whether, biblically, the relationships within the Trinity provide an analogy for human marriage.

Egalitarian scholars complained that Wayne Grudem and some others were departing from the historic, orthodox doctrine of the Trinity by putting forth an eternal (not merely an incarnational) subordination of the Son to the Father.

The discussion came to a head in 2016, when heavyweight theologians on the complementarian side supported those concerns, and repudiated what was being taught, as being a departure from orthodoxy.

The controversy and its resolution are discussed in Terran's article 'Subordinating Jesus and Women (and How Influential Evangelical Teachers Led Us Astray)', which is available at <https://terranwilliams.com/subordinating-jesus-and-women/>.

Do verses 8-9 teach male authority?

In verses 8-9 Paul writes:

'[8] For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; [9] for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake.' (NASB1995)

Or, translated more literally:

'[8] For man is not from woman, but woman from man; [9] for also neither was man created because of the woman, but woman because of the man.' (our translation)

In relation to these verses, Mike formulates his question #7: What is Paul's point about the order and the purpose in the creation of man and woman in verses 8-9?

Mike considers that verses 8-9 are about authoritative male headship. He invites his audience to go back to his Part 2 video and consider what he said there about woman being made for man in Genesis chapter 2 (Part 10: 3hr26mins).

In that video he said that the Man's leadership authority over the Woman was *implied* because the Woman was made for the Man. But we pointed out that Mike was making an illogical leap from the Woman's purpose to the Man's authority. As we wrote in our response:

'If my son needs to learn French, and I therefore procure a tutor *for him*, the tutor's purpose is clear. But the tutor's purpose (the tutor is *for my son*) does not imply that my son has authority over the tutor. So, if the Man is needy because he is alone, and God makes the Woman *for him*, that does not imply that the Man has authority over the Woman.

Or if my college professor, aware of my need for a reading list, makes one for me, that does not show that I have authority over the reading list; rather, it shows the professor's authority.

That God made the Woman for the Man shows *God's* authority, not the *Man's* authority.' And our point about not confusing *the woman's purpose* with *the man's supposed authority* applies as much to 1 Corinthians 11 as to Genesis 2.

Now, here is Mike's interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11:9:

'Woman has a purpose directed toward helping Man in a way that Man does not towards Woman. This is not based upon how you interpret the word *'ēzer*, 'helper', in ... Genesis 2, it is not about that. That has nothing to do with it, so don't get tricked by the word 'help' here, right. But Woman (verse 9) has a purpose directed toward helping Man in a way that Man does not towards Woman. There's a sense in which he is then leading. Right, this relates to authority, ...' (3hr37-38mins)

We agree with Mike that verse 9 refers to Woman having a purpose directed toward helping Man. But Mike's interpretation of this verse has two fatal weaknesses.

The first is the illogical jump at the end: Woman 'helping Man' suddenly turns into Man leading Woman with authority.

But one cannot simply assume that the helper is under the authority of the person being helped. Mike already conceded that point in his Part 2 video. He correctly noted that the Hebrew word for helper (*'ēzer*) carries no connotation of inferiority. God, as Israel's helper, was not under Israel's authority. And so, Mike specifically rejected the common complementarian teaching that Woman was impliedly under Man's authority simply because she was created to be his 'helper' (Part 2: 0hr54-56mins).

Mike offers no reasoning here to explain how he makes his jump from Woman's helping to Man's authority over her. He simply declares 'there's a sense in which he is then leading' (what sense? why? how?) and concludes: 'this relates to authority'. That is not reasoning; it is mere assertion.

The second fatal weakness is his self-contradiction. He needs to disregard his concession about 'helper' that he rightly made in Part 2 (the Woman being helper does not imply the Man's authority). He says that the interpretation of *'ēzer*, helper, has 'nothing to do with' verse 9.

But the Genesis passage in which Woman is made to be Man's helper is exactly what Paul is referring to. And we already explained why the Woman's purpose does not imply the Man's authority.

Mike fails to show that his interpretation comes from the text, rather than from a prior belief in male authority. In verses 8-9 nothing is said *expressly* about man's authority over woman. And Mike does not provide satisfactory reasoning to support his conclusion that man's authority is *implied*.

In a different section of his video, Mike says: 'We should stick to what is there, if possible, before adding new ideas not present in the text' (5hr10mins). We agree. There is nothing in the

text of verses 8-9 about man having authority over woman. By his own criterion, Mike's interpretation of verses 8-9 fails.

Verses 8-9 are about source (verse 8) and purpose (verse 9). Considerations of source and purpose (not of male authority) support the honorable behavior that Paul is asking of men and women when they pray and prophesy.

We should add that Mike advances a forceful criticism of egalitarian readings of verses 8-9 (3hr30-33mins, 37-39mins). We do not address that in this section, because it is not central to the issue of whether Mike has demonstrated that verses 8-9 are about male authority. But Mike believes his criticism to be unanswerable. So, we address it in Postscript (3) below, where we show that it is mistaken because it fails to recognize Paul's train of thought.

The drastic remodeling of verse 10

In the Bible version which Mike uses for this video, verse 10 says:

'Therefore the woman ought to have *a symbol of* authority on her head, ...'¹⁰ (NASB1995)

This verse is the subject of Mike's question #11:

'Does the woman have a "symbol of authority" on her head or does she "have authority over" her own head in vs 10?'

More accurately, to reflect the words of verse 10, the question should be:

'Ought the woman to have a "symbol of authority" on her head or ought she to "have authority over" her own head in vs 10?'

Mike's answer is the former. His interpretation is that, at least in Corinth, the woman ought to wear a head covering as a symbol that she is under man's authority (5hr0mins; 6hr39mins).

However, his answer is not directly based on the words in the text. The reason why the NASB prints the words '*a symbol of*' in italics is because they are not in Paul's Greek.

Word for word, what Paul writes is:

'because of this (*dia touto*) the woman (*hē gunē*) ought (*opheilei*) to have (*echein*) authority (*exousian*) over (*epi*) the head (*tēs kephalēs*)'

(In Greek, *dia touto opheilei hē gunē exousian echein epi tēs kephalēs.*)

So, the straightforward answer to the question is that the woman ought to have authority over her head.

Why, then, do some translations, such as NASB and ESV, add the words '*a symbol of*'?

¹⁰ The verse concludes with the phrase 'because of the angels'. Mike discusses possible meanings of that phrase in a separate section of his video. The uncertainty over the meaning and translation of that phrase does not affect the overall understanding of the passage, so we do not discuss it further here.

The reason is, those additional words are required in order to make Paul's words fit into an interpretation which holds that in this passage Paul is teaching male authority over women. After the insertion of the extra words, the critical phrase is interpreted as meaning that the woman ought to have on her head a symbol of being in subjection to a man's authority. *Without the extra words, the whole male-authority interpretation of the passage falls down at verse 10.*

Why is that so? It is because of the structure of Paul's argument.

The basic structure of Paul's argument in verses 5-10 is plain from the way it is put together. The structure is agreed by commentators of all persuasions.

In this structure, verse 10 is a conclusion about the proper behavior of women. In Paul's mind, the conclusion in verse 10 –

- *is consistent with* what he says about women's behavior in verses 5-6,
- *stands in contrast with* what he says about the proper behavior for men in verse 7, and
- *follows from* his reasoning in verses 7-9.

On the male-authority interpretation:

- Women's behavior in verses 5-6 ought to uphold male authority by the wearing of a suitable head covering (or having long hair fastened up).
- Men's behavior in verse 7 ought to uphold male authority by *not* wearing a head covering (or not having long hair, which is fastened up).
- Paul's reasoning in verses 7-9 is about God instituting male authority over women in the ordering of creation.

Given this structure, on the male-authority interpretation verse 10 *must be* about how a woman's behavior shows that she is under a man's authority by what she wears on her head (or by her hairstyle). *If verse 10 is not about her being under male authority, then the male-authority interpretation is in conflict with the structure of Paul's reasoning.*

Mike regards the interpretation of verse 10 as a peripheral question. He thinks, if necessary, he can get male authority from other verses in the passage, so that his case does not rest on the interpretation of verse 10 (4hr36mins; 6hr39mins).¹¹ But that is not the correct analysis, as many translators have understood. They have taken the exceptional step of adding words that are not in the text only because, on the basis that Paul is writing about male authority, the extra words are required in order to make sense of Paul's structured argument.

If the male-authority view of verse 10 is wrong, then the male-authority view of the passage must also be wrong because it is in conflict with the uncontested structure of Paul's argument.

¹¹ Likewise, Mike's notes say: 'Complementarians are open to both views. Why? Because, if a head covering is a symbol of authority then the C idea is supported. But, if it's not then the Cs find that evidence elsewhere in the passage.'

Because Mike has interpreted verses 5 to 9 as being about a male-over-female authority structure, he considers that the NASB's interpretation of verse 10 is strongly supported, as explained in a quotation from Tom Schreiner about the structure of Paul's argument (4hr43-44mins). If Mike and Tom Schreiner are right about the preceding verses, then verse 10 somehow has to mean more or less what they say it means, despite what it actually says.

But sauce for the goose is also sauce for the gander. If that interpretation of verse 10 cannot be supported, Mike's interpretation of verses 5 to 9 also falls, because of the same uncontested structure.

Mike's literal (mis)translation

Mike's literal translation is:

'... the woman ought to have authority on her head ...'

He immediately comments that this is a difficult phrase to understand (4hr41mins).

It is indeed difficult, for it makes no sense in English. It is not an appropriate translation.

We can see how inappropriate it is if we look at other examples in the New Testament of how *exousian epi* or *exousia epi* are translated. (For clarity: *exousia* and *exousian* are the same Greek word, meaning 'authority' or 'power'; the ending varies, depending on how the word is used grammatically.) We set out below the NASB1995, because Mike uses it for this video, followed by a comparison with the ESV, which is generally the version preferred by complementarians.

Luke 9:1:

'And He called the twelve together, and gave them power and **authority (*exousian*) over (*epi*)** all the demons and to heal diseases.' (ESV: '... **authority over ...**')

Luke 10:19:

'Behold, I have given you **authority (*exousian*) ... over (*epi*)** all the power of the enemy' (ESV: '... **authority ... over ...**')

Revelation 2:26:

'He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE **AUTHORITY (*exousian*) OVER (*epi*)** THE NATIONS' (ESV: '... **authority over ...**')

Revelation 6:8:

'... behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. **Authority (*exousia*)** was given to them **over (*epi*)** a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth.' (ESV: '... **authority over ...**')

Revelation 11:6:

‘... they have **power (exousian) over (epi)** the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague ...’ (ESV: ‘... **power over** ...’)

Revelation 13:7:

‘... **authority (exousia) over (epi)** every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him.’ (ESV: ‘... **authority ... over** ...’)

Revelation 14:18:

‘... another angel, the one who has **power (exousian) over (epi)** fire, came out from the altar ...’ (ESV: ‘... **authority over** ...’)

Revelation 16:9:

‘... they blasphemed the name of God who has the **power (exousian) over (epi)** these plagues.’ (ESV: ‘... **power over** ...’)

Revelation 20:6

‘Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; **over (epi)** these the second death has no **power (exousian) ...**’ (ESV: ‘... **Over** such the second death has no **power ...**’)

The meaning is clear in every instance.

In Luke 9, Jesus tells the twelve that he has given them *authority over* all the demons. He does not mean that he has given them authority on the demons. Nor does he mean that he has given them a symbol of being in subjection under the demons’ authority.

In Luke 10, Jesus tells the seventy-two that he has given them *authority over* all the power of the enemy. He does not mean that he has given them authority on the power of the enemy. Nor does he mean that he has given them a symbol of being in subjection under the enemy’s authority.

In Revelation 2:26, Jesus tells faithful disciples that he will give them *authority over* the nations. He does not mean that he will give them authority on the nations. Nor does he mean that he will give them a symbol of being in subjection under the nations’ authority.

We need not labor the point any longer, since it applies equally to all nine examples. In every case where *exousia(n) epi* is used, it is the person who has or is given the authority or power who has the upper hand. There is no case where the person’s ‘authority’ or ‘power’ refers, instead, to the person’s subjection or to a symbol of the person’s subjection. And in these expressions, *epi* is always translated as ‘over’, never as ‘on’.

If the NASB1995 and the ESV were to translate 1 Corinthians 11:10 consistently with the way they translate *exousian epi* in these examples, the woman ought to have ‘authority’ or ‘power’ ‘over’ her head.¹²

¹² For completeness, we should mention that there is one other NT example of *exousian* followed by *epi*.

Since it is obvious that *exousian epi* means ‘authority over’, why do some interpreters insist on translating it as ‘authority on’, which has no intelligible meaning in English? The advantage of that translation is that it creates a problem of unintelligibility, which then needs a solution: adding ‘a symbol of’; and with this addition the verse is then interpreted as upholding male authority.

Thus, in the NASB1995, ESV and some other versions, verse 10 is *translated as* ‘the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head’, so that it can be *interpreted as* ‘the woman ought to have on her head a symbol of being in subjection to a man’s authority’. This interpretation changes the ordinary meaning of Paul’s words, so as to make them mean roughly the opposite of what they actually say. ‘She ought to have authority’ is turned into ‘She ought to wear a sign of her subjection’.

Mike notes Craig Keener’s protests against this drastic remodeling of God’s word, in two quotations (4hr49mins):

‘The only normal way to read the Greek phrase is to read it that the woman has “authority over her own head.”’

‘See especially W. M. Ramsay, *The Cities of St. Paul: Their Influence on his Life and Thought* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1907), p. 203, who notes that the former idea is such unnatural Greek that no one would have thought of it but for their presupposition on how to read this passage.’

Mike comments:

‘You take it from a guy who knows Greek really well like Ramsay and Keener do – far, far, far, far, far, far better than I ever will. Yeah, that’s a powerful statement.’

While Mike rightly describes what Ramsay and Keener say as ‘a powerful statement’, even that description falls short of the full strength of what they mean, when they say that the ‘symbol-of-being-in-subjection’ interpretation is unnatural Greek.

That interpretation is so entirely contrary to the sense of the words that they are amply justified in saying that no one would have thought of it unless driven to it by a presupposition on how to read this passage.

The point is this: in the New Testament alone, the word *exousia* is used over 100 times, and it is a common word in Greek writings. Yet no scholar has ever found an example, whether in the Bible or in *the whole of ancient Greek literature*, in which a phrase about a person having authority (*exousia*) is used in a reversed sense of being in subjection to an authority. The

This is in Matthew 9:6, with parallels of the same saying in Mark 2:10 and Luke 5:24 – ‘the Son of Man has authority (*exousian*) on (*epi*) earth to forgive sins’. This could mean that the Son of Man has authority over the earth (*epi tēs gēs*) to forgive sins. But here the translators render *epi* as ‘on’ because they understand the text to mean that the earth is the location of the Son of Man when he exercises the authority to forgive. This example is not relevant to 1 Corinthians 11:10, where the head cannot be the location of the woman.

NASB/ESV interpretation of verse 10 is therefore without a single precedent in the whole of ancient Greek literature.

This fact explains the remarkably scathing language of Sir William Ramsay in the work cited by Keener. Ramsay says that the idea, that the woman wears on her head the authority to which she is subject, is-

‘a preposterous idea which a Greek scholar would laugh at anywhere except in the New Testament, where (as they seem to think) Greek words may mean anything that commentators choose.’¹³

But Mike gives some pushback. To try to uphold the ‘symbol-of-being-under-man’s-authority’ meaning, despite what Keener and Ramsay say, Mike relies on four items of supporting material.

In the nature of the case, to justify a drastic remodeling of verse 10, which involves inserting extra words and reversing the natural meaning, unbreakably strong reasons are required. But Mike’s four reasons lack substance. We discuss them in Postscript (1), and show that they fail to support Mike’s interpretation.

In summary, on those four items of attempted support:

- Anthony Thiselton is a respected and generally thorough commentator. However, the particular point from Thiselton which Mike relies on is not supported by the evidence that Thiselton cites. And Mike omits to mention that Thiselton’s own analysis is firmly *against* Mike’s interpretation.
- BDAG adds nothing significant to the arguments.
- Schreiner’s tentative comparison with an ancient statue lacks the needed similarities.
- Schreiner’s proposition that the authority, which Paul says the woman ought to have, is actually a man’s authority over her, flies in the face of Paul’s express words and would be a unique use of the Greek language. It lacks reasoned justification. His only basis for proposing it is to make verse 10 fit a male-authority interpretation of verses 5-9, in which there is no actual mention of male authority.

Those are the inadequate arguments by which Mike claims that verse 10 should have extra words inserted and means roughly the opposite of what Paul’s words say.

The acrobatics required for Mike’s favored interpretation of verse 10 comprise a leap and a handstand. The leap is that the meaning of ‘authority’ is no longer what it says; instead, it refers to a symbol of authority. The handstand is that the authority is no longer the authority of

¹³ William M. Ramsay, *The Cities of St Paul: Their Influence on His Life and Thought: The Cities of Eastern Asia Minor* (1907), 203. Ramsay was ‘on the one hand, a classical scholar and archaeologist, “the foremost authority of his day on the topography, antiquities, and history of Asia Minor in ancient times”; at the same time he was one of the foremost authorities in the study of the New Testament, especially the Book of Acts and the letters of Paul.’ W. Ward Gasque, *Sir William M. Ramsay: Archaeologist and New Testament Scholar. A Survey of His Contribution to the Study of the New Testament*, 1966, 13.

the woman, which Paul states she ought to have. Instead, it is the authority of someone else – a man. This stands the meaning of *exousia* on its head(!) so that it refers not to the authority of the one who has it but to her subjection – a reversal of meaning for which no comparable example exists.

When complementarian teachers indulge in drastic remodeling of Scripture for the purpose of supporting male authority, by reversing the meaning of plain words in the inspired text and adding words which are not there, they should not be surprised when fellow students of the Bible are unconvinced that their interpretation is ‘rightly handling the word of truth’ (2 Timothy 2:15, ESV).

We refer again to Mike’s own statement:

‘We should stick to what is there, if possible, before adding new ideas not present in the text’ (5hr10mins).

There is nothing in the text of verse 10 about the woman being in subjection to a man; nor is there anything in the text of verse 10 about something on the woman’s head being a symbol of her subjection to a man.

It is entirely possible to stick to what is in the text of verse 10, if one lets go of the predetermined notion that in this passage Paul is teaching authoritative male headship.

The relationship of verse 11 to verse 10

Any interpretation has to take into account the relationship between verse 11 and verse 10. Verse 11 starts with *plen*, which is most often translated into English as ‘nevertheless’, ‘however’, or ‘yet’. It signals that what was said previously is being qualified by what is now said, by way of an important change of perspective.¹⁴ Verse 11 says:

‘However (*plen*), in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman.’ (NASB1995).

On Mike’s interpretation, Paul has just made a statement in verse 10 about a woman being under man’s authority. According to Mike, verse 11 (with verse 12) qualifies what has just been said by removing any concern that the woman may be devalued by being under the man’s authority. The qualification in verse 11 balances up what Paul has said about women’s subordination in verse 10, by pointing to the mutual interdependence of men and women:

‘[Paul] starts it with “however” because he wants to make sure to provide the full balance so that it would not lead to abuse.’ (0hr39mins).

¹⁴ Paul typically uses *plen* to introduce a contrast, in the sense of highlighting for his readers something that he particularly wants to emphasize as important, and which differs from what he has just said in the preceding sentence. See his other four uses of this word in Ephesians 5:33; Philippians 1:18; 3:16; 4:14.

But there are two serious problems with this interpretation.

The first problem is, as we have seen, this explanation treats verse 10 as saying roughly the reverse of what it actually says.

However, on the basis of Mike's interpretation of verse 10 (a woman ought to wear a head covering *as a symbol of being under man's authority*), there is still a problem: his explanation is in conflict with the text of verse 11.

If Mike's explanation is correct, and Paul is wanting to provide balance to a statement in verse 10 about woman being under man's authority, Paul should start verse 11 with a statement about man's dependence on woman. Verse 11 should start: 'However, in the Lord, neither is man independent of woman.'

But that is not what Paul does. He does not start verse 11 by pointing to man's status as dependent, to make clear that man is not superior to woman. He does the opposite. He starts with woman's dependence upon man ('in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man'), thereby apparently re-emphasizing her inferiority. That is not a new perspective. If verse 10 is about woman's subordination, the beginning of verse 11 is a reinforcement, not a contrast. As written by Paul, verse 11 starts the wrong way round for Mike's explanation.

Mike's explanation does not work.

We note, however, that if verse 10 is about the woman's authority, as it expressly says, then what Paul says in verse 11 starts the right way round to be a qualification or fresh perspective. Even though a woman ought to have authority (verse 10), nevertheless she is not independent of man (verse 11a).

Ancient scribes who believed that God had placed men in authority over women understood exactly the problem of verse 11 for the male-hierarchy interpretation of the passage. So they 'corrected' the text by swapping over the order of Paul's clauses. This switch was made quite early on. It was already established before Jerome worked on the Latin Vulgate in the late fourth century.¹⁵ This switch found its way into many versions, including the King James Version. But most of our current English versions are based on the best and earliest Greek manuscripts; so, in these, Paul's clauses are in their original order.

The original order of Paul's clauses in verse 11 is another major difficulty for Mike's interpretation, because the interpretation simply doesn't work with Paul's text. Despite the length of his video, Mike offers no solution.

The fact that Mike never considered this major difficulty is another illustration of his mistaken method. In order to ascertain whether 'head' means 'authority over', and whether this passage is about authoritative male headship, he needed to closely examine Paul's train of thought.

¹⁵ The Vulgate reflects the switch.

Instead, Mike assumed at the start, without adequate grounds, that 'head' means 'authority over'.

Why Mike's male-authority interpretation is mistaken: a summary

- Mike's interpretation is in stark conflict with what Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 7. Mike does not offer a plausible answer to this difficulty.
- Mike approaches the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 with a predetermined idea that 'head' in verse 3 is a metaphor for 'authority over'. That idea is derived from the faulty analyses in his Part 8 and Part 9 videos.
- The meaning of the metaphor in verse 3 can only be determined by closely examining Paul's train of thought *in this passage*; but that is the very thing that Mike does not do in his Part 8 and Part 9 videos. In this Part 10 video, his predetermined idea about the meaning of 'head' is his starting point for interpreting Paul's teaching. That is a fundamental error of method.
- The order of the couplets in verse 3 is consistent with the ancient interpretation 'source' and inconsistent with 'authority over'. Mike does not address this difficulty.
- In the express words of the passage, Paul does not mention the authority of Christ over man, man over woman, or God over Christ, but he does mention the authority that a woman ought to have. If 'head' means 'authority over', the necessary clues to the meaning of Paul's metaphor are absent. Compared with the express words, Mike's interpretation is topsy-turvy. Mike does not address this difficulty.
- Verse 3 drives Paul's discussion. If 'head' means 'source' in verse 3, Paul uses each couplet successively in his argument. But if 'head' means 'authority over', the third couplet lies unused by Paul. Mike does not address this difficulty.
- Verses 8-9 are about the original sources and purposes of men and women in the creation story. Mike's argument that verses 8-9 teach male authority is not supported by satisfactory reasoning. He makes an unwarranted leap from the Woman's purpose to the Man's authority.
- For a male-authority interpretation to work, verse 10 has to be about the woman's obligation to wear something on her head as a symbol that she is under a man's authority. But the express words of verse 10 are directly against that interpretation. The verse can only be interpreted in that way by inappropriately translating *epi* as 'on', by inserting extra words which are not in the Greek ('a symbol of'), and by unprecedentedly reversing the meaning of *exousia* ('authority'), so that it refers to the subjection of the person who ought to have it, rather than to their authority. Mike offers four reasons in support of those interpretive acrobatics, but all four are inadequate. Though he relies on Thiselton, he omits to mention that Thiselton is firmly against his interpretation.

- In Paul's original text, the relationship of verse 11 to verse 10 is incompatible with a male-authority-over-women interpretation. The incompatibility was so clear to scribes living in a patriarchal culture that they reversed the order of Paul's clauses. Mike does not address this difficulty.

In short, from verse 2 to verse 16, there is not even one express word in the text about men's authority over women. The hierarchical-complementarian interpretation, which portrays this passage as being about authoritative male headship, is a mirage. It is based on faulty reasoning and lack of close attention to the text. It is contrary to the words of Scripture.

Mike's dangerous dilemma

We recall that Mike is 'still on the fence' as regards whether in 1 Corinthians 11:3 Paul is referring to man and woman or to husband and wife (4hr0mins). This is an uncomfortable fence to sit upon, for he is confronted by a dangerous dilemma.

He tries to avoid the dilemma by suggesting perhaps there is a middle ground. He says that man is the head of woman in a 'broad and general sense', while the head of a particular woman is her husband (4hr4mins).

But this won't do. Remember that when Mike says 'head', he means 'authority over'. So, he needs to explain what he means by man having authority over woman in a 'broad and general sense'. But he does not.

His reticence is understandable. He knows the danger of where a broad and general authority would lead.

If 1 Corinthians 11 is to be read as Paul teaching a gendered hierarchy of man over woman, then no matter how many disclaimers Mike issues, it is logical to conclude that all women should be under the authority of all men with whom they interact. In his videos he repeatedly tries to limit a woman's submission only to her husband and to her male pastors or elders, but a broad and general male-authority interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11 would not be limited to those spheres.

If in 1 Corinthians 11 Paul is teaching a gendered hierarchy, rooted in creation, then in all of society it is problematic if a woman is in co-leadership with a man, or exercises leadership over a man. Women would be obliged to submit to brothers, male friends, male colleagues, and male strangers. This has massive implications for all cross-gender interactions and relationships. It would mean that even in the workplace a woman should not exercise authority over men – as indeed John Piper has hinted. According to Piper,

‘Some roles would involve kinds of leadership and expectations of authority ... as to make it unfitting for a woman to fill the role.’¹⁶

He muses that the relation between a ‘College teacher and her students’, a ‘Bus driver and her passengers’ or a ‘Bookstore manager and her clerks might stretch appropriate expressions of femininity beyond the breaking point’.¹⁷

That view of male-female relations would push our societies in the direction of Iran under the mullahs, and of Afghanistan under the Taliban.¹⁸ But it was firmly contradicted a long time ago, when Deborah, the prophet and judge, was raised up by God to rule over every man and woman in Israel for four decades (Judges 2:14-19; 4 – 5).¹⁹

What is the alternative?

The alternative is that in verse 3 Paul is not referring to *man and woman generally* but to *husband and wife*. While most English versions translate the second couplet of verse 3 as referring to man and woman,²⁰ and this is in line with the overwhelming majority of commentators of all persuasions, the ESV translates it as ‘the head of a wife is her husband’.

This other horn of the dilemma carries a different danger. The danger is to Mike’s position, for it provides another reason which causes his ‘male authority’ interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11 to collapse.

Mike has rightly stated that verse 3 is ‘the overarching principle that drives the whole passage’. So, if Mike says that verse 3 is about husband and wife, he needs to apply that principle to interpret Paul’s argument. But that would lead to nonsense. There is no Bible version which is willing to render verse 12 as saying:

‘For as the wife originates from the husband, so also the husband has his birth through the wife’. (NASB1995, with ‘wife’ and ‘husband’ substituted for ‘woman’ and ‘man’)

After using the word ‘husband’ in the second couplet, the ESV never uses it again in the passage, instead sticking to ‘man’ throughout. And for ‘wife’ or ‘woman’, to try to avoid the nonsense, it dances around, oscillating between the two – ‘wife’ five times, in verses 5, 6, 10 and 13, and ‘woman’ ten times, in verses 7, 8, 9, 11, 12 and 15. Those multiple switches would need to be justified by verbal features of the text, but they are not, and they could not have been guessed at by Paul’s first listeners.²¹

¹⁶ *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (2021 printing), 61.

¹⁷ *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (2021 printing), 60.

¹⁸ At the time of writing, in Iran women are permitted to drive buses containing male passengers, while in Afghanistan women are not permitted to drive buses at all. Piper’s musings would seemingly put us somewhere between those two positions.

¹⁹ See our response to Mike’s Part 3 video on How Women Could and Couldn’t Lead in the Old Testament.

²⁰ Including KJV, NASB, NASB1995, NET, NIV, NRSVUE, ASV, AMP, BRG, CEB, CEV, CSB, Darby, DRA, ERV, EHV, GNV, HCSB, ICB, ISV, Phillips, JUB, KJ21, LEB, MEV, NCV, NKJV, NLT, NMB, RGT, TLV, WEB, WYC, YLT.

²¹ The Greek word *gunē* can be used to mean either ‘woman’ or ‘wife’. The meaning ‘wife’ is conveyed by

So, this is Mike's dangerous dilemma. If he says that Paul's concern is about the authority relationship of *husbands and wives*, his male-authority interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11 collapses into nonsense. But if he says that Paul's concern is about the creation-derived authority relationship of *men and women*, then that relationship should logically be applied across all of life, putting all women under the authority of all men with whom they interact, which he is rightly reluctant to do.

This unacceptable dilemma is another pointer to his interpretation being mistaken.

Some positives to take away

In verses 4-10 Paul differentiates between men and women as created beings, whose differing hairstyles or head coverings should be consistent with the complementarity of their sexuality, which is understood from their sources as depicted in the creation story. This differentiation of men and women has consequences for what behavior is honorable or dishonorable.

But nevertheless (*plen*), what is the position 'in the Lord', that is, in the Messiah, who came from God as our redeemer, as signaled in the third couplet of verse 3? Redemption brings into existence a new creation, as Paul says elsewhere.²² The new creation is what really counts (Galatians 6:15).

'In the Lord, woman is not separate from man, nor is man separate from woman.'

This refers to the unity of man and woman redeemed in Christ. This unity in the Lord goes beyond the created unity available to husband and wife (Genesis 2:24); it is a deeper and broader unity of men and women, who are now redeemed together, being united in the Messiah. This is a similar line of thought to Galatians 3:28: 'there is not "male and female" [Gen. 1:27], for you are all one in Christ Jesus.'

So, Paul is saying that the most important thing here is that God has redeemed men and women so as to be united in Christ. After teaching about the created *differentiation* of men and women in verses 4-10 for the purpose of preserving honorable behavior, Paul takes up the implications of the third couplet of verse 3 and emphasizes that *in Christ* they are *not separated* from each other. This spiritual unity is expressed in the fact that men and women are together leading in worship by praying and prophesying.

Prophesying and leading in prayer are activities that could be thought to involve exercising spiritual authority. But Paul does not say here that women should not prophesy to men; nor

providing a verbal clue. For example, a phrase such as 'his woman' would mean 'his wife', the clue being the word 'his'. *There are no such verbal clues in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16*, as Tom Schreiner agrees (see further *Men and Women in Christ*, 138-139).

²² 2 Corinthians 5:17 ('if anyone is in Christ: a new creation!'). See further Titus 3:5 (*palingenesia*) with Matthew 19:28.

does he say that they should not lead men in prayer. In this passage, Paul places no limitation on the scope of women's participation.

Postscript (1): The inadequate arguments for remodeling verse 10

First, Thiselton

Mike's first item for supporting the drastic remodeling of 1 Corinthians 11:10 is from the well-known scholarly commentary on 1 Corinthians by Anthony Thiselton, where Thiselton writes:

'We should note in passing that most patristic commentators saw no problem in understanding ἐξουσία [*exousia*] in an active sense as metonymy for a sign of power over. Chrysostom observes: "Being covered is a mark of subjection and authority," and Theophylact explicitly understands the metonymic sign of power.²⁰³ Irenaeus understands κάλυμμα [*kalumma*] here.²⁰⁴

Mike says:

'If ancient Greek speakers ... took it to be ... a symbol of authority, then it stands to reason that that's not unnatural Greek.' (4hr50mins)

But there are three problems with this claim and with Mike's reliance on Thiselton.

1. Mike rightly describes Thiselton's commentary on 1 Corinthians as 'pretty well-respected, and pretty helpful'.

Mike does not share with his audience how Thiselton's commentary continues after the three sentences which Mike quotes.

Thiselton's next word is 'However ...'. It is followed by a long discussion in which Thiselton explains why the male-authority interpretation of verse 10 (and hence of the passage as a whole) *should be firmly rejected*.

In summary, Thiselton says the traditional discussion about 'authority' was seriously misconceived and misleading. He judges that Corinthian women had been throwing aside their hoods, or had been unbinding their hair, but Paul is insisting in verse 10 that they keep control of their heads. Thiselton concludes that the issue that Paul is addressing is not male authority over women but assertive autonomy versus self-control (an ethic of moderation and restraint).

2. While Thiselton is a highly-respected commentator, who is usually thorough in his work, his statement that 'most patristic commentators' saw no problem with the symbol-of-male-authority interpretation is not supported by the evidence that he cites from Chrysostom and Theophylact.

Thiselton has quoted from a 19th century English translation of Chrysostom, apparently without checking the Greek text. The Greek does not say ‘Being covered is *a mark of* subjection and authority’.

To understand what was happening in the English translation that Thiselton quotes, it is necessary to be aware that it was in the 19th century that extra words were first inserted into English translations of verse 10 in order to buttress the male-hierarchy interpretation of Paul’s teaching. This was first done in the Revised Version of 1881, which inserted ‘a sign of’. It was this 1881 version that was used by the translators of Chrysostom’s Homilies on 1 Corinthians, for the edition that is cited by Thiselton.

In Homily 26, in the Greek text of what Chrysostom said, Chrysostom’s own words reproduce the Greek text of verse 10 precisely as written by Paul, without any added words. But in the 19th-century translation into English, verse 10 appears with the added words of the 1881 Revised Version:

‘For this cause ought the woman to have *a sign of* authority on her head.’

Thiselton’s quotation of Chrysostom is from Chrysostom’s comments on verse 10, where the English translation says:

‘It follows that being covered is a mark of subjection and authority. For it induces her to look down and be ashamed and preserve entire her proper virtue.’

But the 19th-century translators have taken their cue here from the interpretation promoted by the Revised Version, rather than reproducing what Chrysostom is actually recorded to have said. Chrysostom’s Greek, as recorded by the transcriber of the Homily, is not entirely perspicuous, but it certainly contains no words which mean ‘is a mark of’. Translated literally, it says:

‘So then being covered (is) of submission and of authority; for it accustoms (her) to nod downwards and to feel shame and to keep domestic virtue.’ (our translation; words in brackets are not stated in the Greek but are inferred)²³

It appears that Chrysostom has done his best here to make a comment on verse 10 which fits with his settled conviction that women have been placed under men’s authority by God. He seems to have in mind that there is some kind of connection between a woman’s head covering and submission and authority, *because wearing the appropriate head covering will help her to behave with modest virtue*. But he does not say that the woman’s covering is a mark or sign or symbol of a man’s authority over her.

Then what about Theophylact?

²³ Chrysostom’s own words are recorded as: Ἄρα τὸ καλύπτεσθαι, ὑποταγῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας· κάτω γὰρ νεύειν παρασκευάζει καὶ ἐντρέπεσθαι καὶ τὴν οἰκείαν διατηρεῖν ἀρετὴν. Our thanks to James Dannenberg, Bible translator and exegete, for his assistance with translating Chrysostom accurately.

Thiselton is referring to Theophylact of Ohrid (Archbishop of Bulgaria). But Theophylact was not a patristic commentator. He wrote in the second half of the 11th century, more than 1,000 years after Paul, after many centuries of hierarchical interpretation. His view does not provide a secure guide to how an ancient Greek speaker around Paul's time would have understood Paul's words in verse 10.

3. The quoted sentence from Thiselton about Irenaeus's understanding of *kalumma* (veil) in verse 10 does not provide any support for understanding verse 10 to refer to a symbol of authority.

We should first explain that the sentence is rather misleading for readers who have not read Irenaeus. It refers to Irenaeus's report of the heretical beliefs of the Valentinian Gnostics. (Valentinus flourished around 150 AD.) The Valentinians re-wrote verse 10 as referring to a veil, interpreting it as an affirmation of Gnostic beliefs, which were bizarre speculations entirely unrelated to Paul's actual reasoning (see the text in our footnote).²⁴ To the best of our knowledge, this heresy was the source of the idea that in verse 10 Paul was referring to a woman's veil.

Even if Irenaeus himself may also have thought that verse 10 referred to a veil, neither Irenaeus nor the Valentinians say that the veil is a symbol of subjection. As can be seen from reading it, the cited passage depicts the veil as a means of preserving modesty, not as a symbol of subjection.

The upshot is that Mike's reliance on Thiselton's commentary does not support Mike's position. Thiselton's unsatisfactory references to a 19th-century English paraphrase of Chrysostom and to Theophylact do not justify Mike's claim that the symbol-of-being-in-subjection interpretation reflects how a Greek speaker would naturally understand Paul's words. Worse than that, Thiselton's full discussion is firmly against Mike's interpretation.

Second, BDAG

In order to support the 'symbol-of-being-in-subjection' meaning of verse 10, Mike's second item of supporting material is that the BDAG lexicon describes it as a viable meaning, though recognizing that it is debated (4hr51mins).

²⁴ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 1.8.2: '... They maintain, further, that that girl of twelve years old, the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue, to whom the Lord approached and raised her from the dead, was a type of Achamoth, to whom their Christ, by extending himself, imparted shape, and whom he led anew to the perception of that light which had forsaken her. And that the Saviour appeared to her when she lay outside of the Pleroma as a kind of abortion, they affirm Paul to have declared in his Epistle to the Corinthians, "And last of all, He appeared to me also, as to one born out of due time." Again, the coming of the Saviour with His attendants to Achamoth is declared in like manner by him in the same Epistle, when he says, "A woman ought to have a veil upon her head, because of the angels." Now, that Achamoth, when the Saviour came to her, drew a veil over herself through modesty, Moses rendered manifest when he put a veil upon his face. ...'

But that is of no real value for the discussion, since BDAG is simply reflecting one of the extant interpretations of the verse. All it tells us is that some commentators have read the verse in that way. We knew that already.

Third, Schreiner’s argument about symbols on the head

Mike’s third item is Tom Schreiner’s argument that ‘it is not at all unusual for something on the head to be a symbol of something else’ (4hr51mins-54mins).

We agree in principle that something worn on the head could be a symbol of something else. For example, a victor’s wreath is a symbol of victory. But verse 10 does not mention anything worn on the head. It says that a woman ought to have authority over the head. If a thing on her head was to be a symbol of something, one might have expected the thing on her head to be mentioned.

The two biblical examples provided by Schreiner do not support Mike’s interpretation of verse 10:

‘The dragon, in Revelation 12:3, has seven heads on which are seven crowns. Clearly, these crowns symbolize the dragon’s authority and power.’²⁵

There is no good reason to read across from Revelation 12:3 to 1 Corinthians 11:10. However, if we do so, and if something is imagined to be on the woman’s head, it would symbolize her own authority, contrary to Mike’s view.

‘When Jesus returns on a white horse (Revelation 19:11-12) “on his head are many crowns,” symbolizing His kingly authority.’²⁶

Again, there is no good reason to read across from this scripture to 1 Corinthians 11:10, but if we do so, and if something is imagined to be on the woman’s head, it would symbolize her own authority, contrary to Mike’s view.

Schreiner tries to save the day with a single citation from a secular author, a Greek historian called Diodorus, who was writing in Sicily in the first century BC. Here is what Schreiner says:²⁷

‘The text describes a statue of the mother of King Ozymandias, and reads as follows:

“There is also another statue of his mother standing alone, a monolith twenty cubits high, and it has three kingdoms on its head, signifying that she was both daughter and wife and mother of a king” (1.47.5).

Here the three crowns (which Diodorus calls kingdoms) all represent someone else’s authority—the authority of the woman’s father (who was a king), husband (who was a king), and son (who was a king). In no case is the woman’s own authority symbolized by the

²⁵ Schreiner, in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, (2021 printing), 172.

²⁶ Schreiner, in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, (2021 printing), 172.

²⁷ Schreiner, in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, (2021 printing), 172-173. Although Schreiner does not give due credit, the argument based on this extract from Diodorus was advanced by Henry Stanley, Dean of Canterbury (died 1871).

crowns she wears. Similarly, the head covering of the woman in 1 Corinthians 11 may well represent the authority of the man to whom she is subject in authority.'

In order to establish his point, the first thing that Schreiner needs to do is to produce an example where the crown or other item on a person's head symbolizes that the person is under someone else's authority. But this example from Diodorus does not fit the bill.

It is possible that by 'kingdoms' Diodorus is describing crowns. Let's assume Schreiner is right about that. But even if we make that assumption, there is a problem. It is clear that the message of this statue is not a message about the authority of the kings over the woman, whom we may call the Queen Mother.

This is a statue of a very prominent woman. The Queen Mother was prominent because she was the daughter of a king, the wife of a second king, and the mother of a third king. The statue proclaims her great prominence by reason of those three family relationships. The crowns (or kingdoms) draw visible attention to those three relationships. The crowns here each represent the person of a king who is related to her, not the authority of a king over her. (And this is underlined by the fact that Diodorus does not even call them crowns. The word 'kingdom' does not naturally imply a symbol of authority over her.)

Schreiner, as a careful scholar, knows that it would be an enormous leap from this description of an ancient statue to a conclusion about the meaning of verse 10. So, instead of drawing a conclusion, he makes a tentative suggestion that the woman's head covering in 1 Corinthians 'may well represent the authority of the man to whom she is subject in authority'.

The size of the leap is somewhat obscured by the first word of Schreiner's concluding sentence – 'Similarly, ...'. We invite readers to consider what are the real similarities. The subject in each case is a woman. There the similarities end. The Queen Mother is said to have some things on her head. The woman in 1 Corinthians is not, but she is told that she ought to have authority over the head.

The key similarities that Schreiner's argument needs are absent. What is on the statue's head does not represent authority over the Queen Mother. And no item capable of having a symbolic meaning is said to be on the woman's head in 1 Corinthians 11:10.

Fourth, a reference to the man's authority?

Schreiner knows that he is not on strong ground in trying to argue that 'authority' here has a reversed, passive meaning, referring to being in subjection, since there is no example of such a usage of *exousia* anywhere in Greek literature. So he adds a final argument:

'Even if *authority* has an active meaning here, it refers to the man's authority, not the woman's, in this context. Paul explicitly says the woman "ought" to have "authority" on her

head, and the most sensible explanation is that she ought to wear a head covering as a symbol of man's authority over her.²⁸

This is Mike's fourth item of supporting material. Mike assesses this final argument as 'super important and relevant' (4hr59mins).

But Schreiner's final argument is barely an argument at all. He offers no justification for translating *epi* as 'on'. When the natural meaning of Paul's words is 'the woman ought to have authority over (*exousian epi*) the head', it is difficult to see how 'the most sensible explanation' is something entirely different. The probable meaning is that Paul wishes to see her authority exercised in an honorable choice of hairstyle or head covering.²⁹

Schreiner says that the authority is the man's authority, not the woman's, '*in this context*'. Those last three words reflect the fact that, on Schreiner's understanding of Paul's reasoning in the preceding verses, Paul *has to be* talking about man's authority over woman.

But this merely highlights the problem of verse 10 for the hierarchical interpretation: if the preceding verses are really talking about man's authority over woman (even though in fact they say nothing expressly about that topic), then verse 10 *has to be* interpreted by audacious measures which add words to the text and reverse Paul's meaning. But there is no other reason for this drastic remodeling of verse 10.

Postscript (2): Mike's use of verse 12 against 'source' in verse 3

Mike raises a particular objection to the metaphorical meaning 'source' for 'head' in verse 3.

Mike does accept that in verses 8-9 Paul is talking about 'source'. Woman was made from man. Woman was created for man. Man is her source (1hr47mins). But he goes on to argue that this does *not* show that 'head' in verse 3 means 'source'.

His objection is this: if *kephalē* only means 'source' and not 'authority', then verse 12 proves too much and creates a contradiction with verse 3.

He says:

- In verse 12 Paul points out that men are born from women.
- Therefore, in verse 12 women are men's source.
- But that is contrary to verse 3, because in verse 3 man is supposedly the head or source of woman.

²⁸ Schreiner, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, (2021 printing), 173.

²⁹ Alternatively, on the assumption that some men or husbands had not been allowing women or their wives the freedom to decide on their own head-coverings, some commentators understand it to mean that Paul is insisting on a woman's power to decide on her own head-covering.

So, Mike considers that the 'source' meaning for *kephalē* 'fundamentally ruins' Philip Payne's egalitarian view of the entire passage (1hr50mins).

But we need to notice here Mike's defense of his own view of the relationship of verses 11-12 to verses 8-10. Verse 11 starts with 'However', so it is a qualification to the preceding verses, or a fresh perspective. Mike therefore says of verses 11-12, 'This is nuance, it's not refutation.' (1hr49mins). According to Mike, Paul is ensuring in verses 11-12 that his teaching about male authority is not pressed further than he intends, so as to turn the authority structure into an abusive relationship.

But a corresponding explanation applies to the 'source' interpretation of the passage.

In verse 3 Paul uses his *kephalē* metaphor for sources. In line with this, in verses 8-9 he refers to man as the source of woman (in the creation story in Genesis). But, in verses 11-12, Paul is pointing out the interdependence of man and woman, whether in Christ or otherwise. If in verse 12 Paul is referring to the fact that men are born from women, this is a source in a less foundational sense than man as woman's creation-source in verse 3. That is a balancing perspective, not a refutation.

Thus, verses 11-12 do not nullify Paul's original talk of sources in verse 3 onwards; rather, they prevent his teaching based on those sources being pressed further than he intends.

The better conclusion is that verses 8-9 directly support the meaning 'source' in verse 3. In verses 8-9, Paul is using his keynote statement about sources in his development of his reasoning. That is not contradicted by the balancing perspective which Paul brings to bear in verses 11-12.

Postscript (3): Mike's criticism of egalitarian readings of verses 8-9

Mike advances a forceful criticism of all non-hierarchical readings of verses 8-9.

He explains this criticism as part of his critique of Philip Payne's interpretation.

Disappointingly, he starts out with a misrepresentation about what Payne writes.

He quotes verses 8-9 from Philip Payne's translation with explanatory comments, which Payne sets out in his book.³⁰ Then Mike says:

'He doesn't explain it in a lot of detail, but here you have it.' (3hr31mins)

That is not a correct statement. Since we believe the best of Mike, we take it to be an innocent mistake, perhaps due to a lapse of memory.

Mike's quotation is from chapter 13 of Payne's book, where Payne is summarizing his conclusions. But Payne's discussion of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 began more than 100 pages

³⁰ *Man and Woman, One in Christ*, 213.

earlier, in chapter 6.³¹ Payne explains his interpretation of verses 8-9 over several pages in chapter 10. (Mike refers to that chapter in his notes for his answer to question #10.)

Payne's interpretation is tied up with his carefully argued view that the whole passage is about head coverings in the sense of *hairstyles* rather than head coverings in the sense of *garments placed over the head*. Thus, in verses 4 and 5 Paul is saying that it is dishonorable for a man (v 4) or a woman (v 5) to pray or prophesy with long hair hanging down. According to verse 7, a man should also not fasten up long hair like a woman; instead, he should have short hair (v 14). Verse 10 means that a woman should exercise authority over her own head by fastening up her long hair.

In Payne's view, Paul is concerned with the dishonorable message given by 'wild hair' in the prevailing cultural context in Corinth. If a man had long hair, that was regarded as effeminate and implied willingness to engage in same-sex liaisons. If a woman had long hair hanging down, rather than fastened up neatly on her head, that implied willingness to engage in extramarital liaisons with men. To allow those implications caused dishonor. The Corinthians should present themselves in worship in a way that is honoring to God and to his purposes for men and women. No other church had such a custom of praying or prophesying with long hair hanging down (v 16).

In summary, Payne considers that Paul is talking about sources in verse 3 and again in verses 8-9; Paul has in mind God's purposes for men and women, including as faithful sexual partners, as taught in the creation stories in Genesis chapters 1 and 2.

Picking up Paul's reasoning at the end of verse 7, Payne explains (180-181):

'... [*Verses 8 and 9 give*] reasons for the immediately preceding statement that woman is the glory of man in verse 7c. ...

Immediately prior to the man's "glorying" in woman is the narrative of God creating woman from man (Gen 2:21-22) to be his partner. First Corinthians 11:8 develops Paul's introduction in verse 3 that man was the source from which God made woman. Woman is the glory of man, for she came from him. It is because she corresponds to him, having come from him, that she can complement him as his mate. God's central purpose in creating woman from man was to create an intimate and procreative partner for man (Gen 1:27-28; 2:20).

Paul proves that he had God's purpose in mind by his concluding affirmation that woman was created "for the sake of man," to fulfill man's need for an intimate sexual partner. ...'

In fairness to Philip Payne, Mike would do well to issue a correction to the statement that Payne does not provide a detailed explanation of his view.

³¹ From page 109 onwards.

As regards the substance of Payne's view, Mike judges that it is impossible for it to be correct because it 'creates an instantaneous contradiction' in verse 9:

'If Woman being made for Man means that Woman is Man's sexual partner, *then Man not being made for Woman (verse 9) means that he is not her proper sexual partner. ...*

... So, if the sexual fit view is what you're going to hold, *then you have to say that men are not sexually fit for women, which is demonstrably false.'* (3hr31-32mins)

At first sight, Mike's criticism seems weighty.

But it is misplaced, because it imposes on verses 8-9 a different logic from the logic that is evidently in Paul's mind. It may be that Payne's explanation could be improved upon, but Mike's criticism rests on a misunderstanding of *Paul's* train of thought.

In verse 7b, Paul's statement about *the man being the image and glory of God* picks up the first couplet from verse 3, that Christ is the head of every man. This is about the creation of man to be God's image in the world.

Then in verses 8a and 9a, when Paul writes that 'man is not from woman' and 'neither was man created because of the woman', he still has in mind that same point about man's creation. Man was not created from woman or because of the woman but was created through Christ for the purpose of being God's image.

In verse 7c, Paul's statement about *the woman being the glory of man* picks up the second couplet from verse 3, that man is head of woman. This is about the purpose of woman as depicted in Genesis 2. She is created from man in order to be man's helper and, in Payne's words, his 'intimate and procreative partner'. In Genesis 2:23 man glories in her.

Then in verses 8b and 9b, when Paul writes that 'woman (is) from man' and that she was created 'because of the man', he still has in mind that same point about woman's creation. Woman was made from man and because of man in order to be the glory of man in the sense depicted in Genesis 2.

So, in verse 7b and 7c, Paul's points about men and about women are *in contrast with* each other but are *not mirror-image opposites*.

And, in exactly the same way, Paul's points about men and women in verses 8 and 9 should be understood as contrasts but not as mirror-image opposites.

Mike's criticism fails because it wrongly treats Paul's points about man's creation and woman's creation as mirror-image opposites. If we allow the couplets in verse 3 to govern the interpretation, that is not how Paul intends them to be understood.

Mike makes similar criticisms of other egalitarian interpretations. He says:

'If Paul meant that the woman was needed for the man to fulfill his calling, then Paul would also be saying that woman does not need man to fulfill her calling.' (3hr33mins)

And:

‘Man needs woman’s strength. I’ve read that. But that’s implying woman doesn’t need man’s strength. So, that doesn’t work.’

‘Man can’t do his job without woman. But that implies a woman can do her job without a man, including procreation.’

‘Man is incomplete without woman ... but then that implies woman is complete without man and that obviously would be false and not something that Paul’s teaching’
(3hrs38mins)

Mike’s criticisms of these egalitarian views all rest on the same failure to trace Paul’s train of thought in verses 7-9, where verses 8 and 9 repeat and develop the two points that Paul introduced in verse 7b and 7c, derived respectively from the first two couplets in verse 3 – points which are in contrast with each other, but which are not mirror-image opposites.

In Mike’s view, alongside the meaning of verse 3, the interpretation of verses 8-9 is the other key issue for the whole passage. It is a ‘huge, huge issue’, where ‘egalitarian interpretations will demonstrably fail’ (3hr22mins). It’s ‘a kind of a weak spot for them’ (3hr37mins).

But that analysis is mistaken. Mike’s forceful criticism of egalitarian interpretations of verses 8-9 is not justified, because it does not accurately recognize Paul’s train of thought.