On the Significance of *Kephalē* ("Head"): A Study of the Abuse of One Greek Word[1]

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There has been, and continues to be, a great deal of confusion, consternation, and perhaps grief, over the meaning of the Greek word *kephalē* ("head") in the NT. Some claim that the word means "source";[2] others claim that it means "authority over";[3] still others have different ideas regarding the meaning of this Greek word.[4] A great deal of ink has been spilled defending this or that position while attacking the others, yet the debate continues. There are many issues related to the understanding of words in general (semantics), and to *kephalē* in particular, that have either been ignored, downplayed, or misconstrued by various proponents of the meaning of *kephalē* in the NT. Essentially, traditionalists argue that *kephalē* means "authority over" whereas egalitarians argue that the meaning of this Greek word is "source." Authors on both sides of this debate have committed errors in the form of arguments used, in the method of semantic analysis, as well as in the citation of their primary Greek sources.[5] In this article, I will review some general principles of semantic analysis and some other related background issues which bear on the meaning of *kephalē* in the NT. I will also discuss how the Septuagint (the translation of the Hebrew OT into Greek in the third to second centuries BC) and some other Greek authors (notably Plato, Plutarch, and Philo) have been misappropriated in the discussion of *kephalē*. Because there are so many various passages in Greek literature which have been invoked as "proof" for this or that side in the debate, I cannot possibly review them all. Rather, I have selected only certain passages for discussion in order to illustrate the points I wish to make.

1. Issues Pertaining to Methodology

It is widely understood by linguists, lexicographers, and philosophers that words do not have one and only one meaning; they have several meanings, some of them quite distinct. Words have a variety of *denotations* (things they represent) as well as *connotations* (implied or associated meanings).[6]

One of the many problems that are characteristic of some of the studies about *kephalē* in the NT is that some modern authors have confused possible or proposed connotations with denotations. Some claim that "source" is the primary denotation of *kephalē*; others that "ruler," "leader," or "authority over," is primary. Let me illustrate the problem of denotations and connotations by discussing briefly the meanings of these words in English. It will naturally be easier for English speakers to understand my point in English rather than in Greek.

We may speak of God the Creator as the *source* of the universe because he created the universe and everything in it; he is its originator. However, the English word "source" does not always connote origin or beginning. The *source* of a river is its surface beginning point and is not necessarily the same as its origin. A river's actual origin may in fact be underground and miles away from its apparent *source*. Similarly, the *sources* I used in writing this article consist in the books and articles, both Greek and English, that I consulted, but they are not the origin of my ideas and thoughts on this topic. Also, the English words *origin* and *beginning* are not always equivalent. The *origin* of a book, movie, or play is not the same thing as its *beginning*.

Likewise, the English word *leader* does not ipso facto possess the connotation of authority although such a connotation may be present, or even required, in a given context. Also, the English words *ruler* and *leader* are not equivalent. In English, *ruler* carries the connotation of governing in a political sense,[7] whereas *leader* need not carry such a connotation. The relationship between the two terms is partitive: all rulers are leaders, but not all leaders are rulers. *Lead(er)* may denote someone/thing who is first (e.g., with reference to a parade); or it may denote a guide (e.g., to *lead* the way through a forest); or it may denote a main or prominent part (e.g., a *leading* part in a play) or a prominent person who is foremost in a given field of expertise (e.g., Gordon D. Fee as a *leading* theologian). In none of these examples can the term *lead*(*er*) be replaced with *rule*(*r*). One does not *rule* through the forest; the leader of a parade is not its *ruler*; and Fee is not a *ruling* theologian. Choosing to translate *kephalē* into English as "source," "originator," "ruler," "leader," "chief," "authority over," or whatever, is potentially misleading in English because these English words are neither exact equivalents of each other nor of the word *kephalē*. These English words possess various connotations which may or may not be present in the Greek word *kephalē*. The danger here is alleging that an English connotation is necessarily present in the Greek word because that Greek word can be translated by a certain English word. Connotations often do not translate from one language to another.

Moreover, in the NT when Christ is called *kephalē*, the word is used as a metaphor: "A figure of speech in which a word or phrase that ordinarily designates one thing is used to designate another, thus making an implicit comparison."[8] This is important because some modern authors have disregarded the use of *kephalē* as a metaphor. In their zeal to "prove" that "source" or "authority" is a legitimate meaning of *kephalē* in extra-biblical Greek, some have provided citations of *kephalē* in other Greek authors where the actual use of *kephalē* is in fact literal, not metaphorical at all. One cannot prove that a metaphorical use of a word is legitimate by citing literal uses of that word. The English word *chair* is an interesting parallel. One the one hand, *chair* denotes the thing that you sit on; on the other hand, *chair* as a metaphor also denotes the leader (but not ruler) of a department or board (another metaphor). *Chair* is in fact an abbreviated form of *chairman*, *chairwoman*, *chairperson* and is common in English. Every college and university in the country has departments and every corporation has boards, and there is a designated *chair* (not the thing, but the person) for each one. Using a word such as *chair* (or *kephalē*) literally does not make it into a metaphor, which by definition is an extension of the literal use of a word.

Another problem that some modern writers have had in their discussions of *kephalē* is that they have disregarded the periods of Greek literature. Greek is a living language, and as with all languages, it has undergone considerable change over the centuries. Modern Greek is considerably different from ancient Greek. All languages change with respect to grammar, word forms, and meanings. In fact, there was considerable change even in ancient Greek. Thus, arguments which may appear significant or convincing to readers who have little or no grounding in ancient Greek literature are in fact either misleading at best or downright deceptive at worst. For this reason, one cannot simply lump "ancient Greek" together as a single entity, especially since the term "ancient Greek" covers a vast period of time, about 1,500 years. Languages change a great deal during such a time period, and Greek did as well. The Greek of Homer (eighth to ninth centuries BC) is considerably different from Plato's (c. 429–347 BC) which is also very different from St. Paul's (first century AD). One cannot therefore assume that a particular Greek word has the same meaning in the NT as it does in Homer or even in Plato (or any other author of a different time period), and yet such an assumption has been tacitly assumed by some modern authors regarding the meaning if *kephalē*.[9]

Modern Classics scholars have traditionally divided ancient Greek into the following general time periods:[10]

Archaic	10th–5th centuries BC
Classical	5th–4th centuries BC
Hellenistic	4th–1st centuries BC
Roman	1st century BC–5th century AD
Byzantine	5th–15th centuries AD
Modern	15th century–present

These demarcations are modern conveniences, not hard and fast divisions of the language or the history of the Greeks. Language change is always gradual. Plato (classical period) would certainly have been perfectly intelligible to Alexander the Great (Hellenistic period) because their lives overlapped; Plato was about seventy-three when Alexander was born and Alexander was about nine when Plato died. Paul, in the first century, would have had little trouble reading Plato (roughly analogous to our reading Shakespeare today, although that is becoming increasingly difficult for modern English speakers). However, St. Paul would have had considerable difficulty reading Homer (roughly analogous to our reading Chaucer).

Authorship is another important issue that must be considered. Various authors may use the same word in quite different ways. For example, the Greek word *theos* ("god") while always denoting supernatural beings in Greek, may encompass widely divergent ideas or connotations. Context is the deciding factor for determining what a given author means by using particular words in particular ways. For Homer, a polytheist, the *theoi* ("gods") are personal, supernatural beings who are quite active in human affairs. However, in Plato, who was also a polytheist, the *theoi* are more abstract, philosophical constructs.[11] On the other hand, for St. Paul, a monotheist, *theos* is the God of Israel, the God of the OT, and in fact Jesus is God incarnate. Thus, Homer's, Plato's, and St. Paul's understandings

of the word *theos* are quite distinct and these distinctions can be seen in the ways each author uses the word.

In the same way, authorship is also relevant in determining the connotation(s) of *kephalē*. It is simply misleading to imply, as some modern authors have done, that *kephalē* means the same, or nearly the same, thing in most Greek authors. The meaning of *kephalē* in Church Fathers such as Chrysostom (ca. AD 350–407), Athanasius (ca. AD 296–373), Basil (ca. AD 330–379) or any other writer more than two centuries after the NT is irrelevant in determining what *kephalē* meant to St. Paul in the first century AD. As I said earlier, languages change, and it is entirely possible that there was a shift in the connotation of *kephalē after* the NT, perhaps even because of it. In principle, to import Athanasius's connotation of *kephalē*, or Plato's, onto St. Paul would be as foolish as me addressing a group of men as *girls* because that is what Chaucer would have said. Whether or not there has in fact been any shift in the connotation, implication, or metaphorical extensions of *kephalē* is beyond the scope of this article. To the best of my knowledge, no historical study of the connotations and uses of *kephalē* has ever been done. Such a study would best be undertaken by classically trained lexicographers, not theologians.

2. On the Meaning "Source"

Catherine Clark Kroeger[12] has argued that *kephalē* commonly meant "source" in ancient Greek. One of the major drawbacks of her article is that she mixes authors and time periods and that many of the authors she cites discuss either physiology (thus *kephalē* is used literally with reference to the head), or philosophical systems in which *kephalē* is often used literally as well.[13] Other authors Kroeger cites lived after the NT period (second century AD or later) and are thus irrelevant to the discussion. Most of the authors cited by Kroeger do not in fact use the word *kephalē* as a metaphor for "source." As far as I know, there are only two occurrences in pre-biblical Greek of the alleged use of *kephalē* as a metaphor for "source." However, this notion is not at all firmly fixed in either passage. Following are the texts in question with a brief comment:[14]

1) The Orphic Fragment 21: Zeus is the beginning (*arkhē*), Zeus is the middle, and by Zeus everything is accomplished. Zeus is the foundation both of earth and of sparkling heaven.[15]

This is a fragment of a poem whose date is uncertain. It may be as early as the fifth century BC, although a great deal of Orphic literature is much later. The word *kephalē* does not occur in this fragment; however, there is a variant version of this poem, Fragment 21A, which does use *kephalē* in place of *arkhē* (beginning): "Zeus is the head, Zeus is the middle. . . ." The use of "source" as a translation for *arkhē* may be misleading. *Arkhē* is another Greek word which is fraught with ambiguity. The word means "1. beginning, origin; first principle or element; end, extremity; 2. first place or power, sovereignty; magisterial office."[16] What then is the best translation for the phrase, "Zeus is"? Out of context, all of the following are good translations: "Zeus is the beginning/origin/source/first principle/end/power/sovereignty." All of these ideas are true of Zeus's characteristics as understood by pagan Greeks. Which one is the best translation

for the phrase in Orphic Fragment 21A? Due to the presence of the word *messa* (middle) and the overall context, *arkhē* is best translated as "beginning." Neither "source" nor "authority over" is relevant here. At best, the meaning of *kephalē* here is disputable, although it most likely means "starting-point" or "beginning."[17] The mere equation of *kephalē* = *arkhē*; *arkhē* = "source"; therefore, *kephalē* = "source" is both a logical and a semantic fallacy.

2) Herodotus's *Histories* 4.91: The headsprings (*kephalai*) of the Tearus give water that is the best and most beautiful of all rivers.[18]

Here, *kephalai* (plural) appears to be a synonym of *pēgai* (springs) and refers to the apparent source of the Tearus River. However, it is more likely that *kephalē* here in Herodotus connotes "either extremity of a linear object" because the word is used in Greek to refer also to the mouth of a river as well as its source.[19] "Source" is a possible translation here for *kephalē* given the context because it is the proper English word to use, but *kephalē* is not here a metaphor for source.

Of other passages claimed to mean "source," some are from Philo (to be discussed below) and others from the *Oneirocriticon* by Artemidorus Daldianus, a second century AD author, or from various Church Fathers. Because Daldianus and the Fathers are late, their use of *kephalē* is irrelevant to its meaning in the NT.

3. On the Connotations of "Prominence" or "Preeminence"

There has been some objection to the connotations of prominence or preeminence as they apply to *kephalē*.[20] Even though these English words are not found in LSJ,[21] they *are* used in other NT dictionaries. Thayer uses the word "prominent:" "Metaph. anything *supreme, chief, prominent*; of persons, *master, lord*."[22] The word "prominent" is also used in the TDNT: "But this leads us to the second aspect, i.e., not merely what is first, or supreme, at the beginning or end, but also what is 'prominent,' 'outstanding,' or 'determinative.'"[23] Nida and Louw use the word "preeminent:" "one who is of supreme or pre-eminent status, in view of authority to order or command."[24]

Following is my rationale for claiming that "prominent" is a valid aspect of the meaning of *kephalē*. Grudem states that the notion of "authority over" is primary with respect to the meaning of *kephalē*, and that the notions of prominence or preeminence, if they are valid at all, are mere "overtones" of that metaphor. He further states that preeminence "*without any nuance of leadership or authority*" flies in the face of the facts.[25] However, I suggest that the opposite is the case. What is the distinction in English between "prominent" and "preeminent?" *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* defines "prominent" as follows: "1. Projecting outward or upward from a line or surface; protuberant. 2. Immediately noticeable; conspicuous. 3. Widely known; eminent." The same dictionary provides the following definition for "preeminent:" "Superior to or notable above all others; outstanding." The notion of authority is absent from these definitions, but that is not to say that authority could not be present in a particular context. Contrary to Grudem, it is *not* the case that the notions of prominence and authority are intrinsically linked together. Things, as well as people, may have prominence without authority (e.g., the mass of entertainment celebrities in American culture who, while they do exert influence in society, do

not have any "authority over" society). Also, authority may exist without prominence—the police forces in any given community, for example, do have authority within those communities, but they are not necessarily *prominent* parts of them. The same is true of the metaphorical use of the Greek word *kephalē*; authority is not a *necessary* entailment of the metaphor, but I suggest that prominence is.

I take the Greeks' metaphorical use of *kephalē* to have a rather physical and vertical orientation. Just as the head is the topmost part of humans' and animals' physiology, and due to the fact that the head contains the organs of *aisthēsis* (sense-perception), so the head is the most prominent part of our bodies. This notion of topness/prominence was then projected onto other objects, such as trees, mountains, and waves where the top is the most prominent part, especially at a distance; thus the Greeks could speak of the *head* of a tree, of a mountain, or of a wave. Then if the vertical orientation is turned on its side, i.e. horizontally, the notion of *kephalē* can be applied to the *ends* of things, since the head is at one end of a body which is lying down. Other specific metaphorical uses of *kephalē* can then be derived by further extensions of this vertical/horizontal orientation; e.g. Herodotus could speak of the source of the Tearus river as being the *heads* (*kephalai*) because the beginning of a river is one end of a line so to speak.[26]

One may wonder what the difference between "prominence" and LSJ's definition of "end, extremity" is. The difference is partitive, i.e., that "prominence" includes "extremity" (prominent parts are also ends of things), but "extremity" does not include "prominence" (not every end point is prominent), e.g., the "head" of a mountain or of a person's body is not *merely* its "end point," but is also its prominent end. I think that this explanation of the metaphorical use of *kephalē* is superior both to LSJ's definition based on "end point," and to Grudem's suggestion that "authority" is the "primary meaning." The top of a mountain, or the sources of the Tearus River do not possess authority over the mountain or river itself; "authority over" is not even relevant in this regard, but "prominence" is.

4. On *Kephalaion* ("sum, total") as a Supporting Argument

In support of his contention that *kephalē* is a common metaphor for authority in Greek, Grudem has suggested an argument based upon semantic change. He notes that the noun *kephalaion* does denote a personal metaphor (LSJ: "of persons, *the head* or *chief*") "in an earlier period" of the Greek language; that the noun *kephalē* may not have functioned in that capacity in classical Greek; and he suggests that there may have been a semantic shift whereby *kephalē* took on the sense of *kephalaion* as a personal metaphor by the NT period.[27] As persuasive as his argument may appear to those who have not studied the Greek language, it is dead wrong, and is entirely misleading to anyone who does not have a background in classical Greek language and literature. First of all, the noun *kephalaion* means "chief or main point, sum, total" and is never used of persons as a metaphor for authority in Greek literature *until the fourth century AD*. Under the entry in LSJ for *kephalaion* referring to persons as the "head" or "chief," there are nine citations from five authors, but only two of those authors antedate the NT: Eupolis (fifth century BC) and Menander (ca. 344–392 BC). The

other three authors lived *after* the NT was written; thus their use of *kephalaion* is irrelevant as supporting evidence for any alleged semantic change which occurred *before* the NT period.[28]

Eupolis was a comic poet of the classical period whose writings survive only in fragments. The relevant passage is actually quoted by Plutarch (ca. AD 50–120) in his *Pericles*. It was common knowledge to Greeks that Pericles, a Greek statesman (ca. 495–429 BC), had an abnormally shaped head, and Plutarch quotes several of the quips and gibes that various comic poets had made regarding Pericles's odd-shaped head. The last quotation Plutarch includes is the following from Eupolis:

> And Eupolis, in his "Demes," having inquiries made about each of the demagogues as they come up from Hades, says, when Pericles is called out last:—"The very head (*kephalaion*) of those below hast thou now brought" (*Pericles* 3.3–4).[29]

It is clear from this context in Plutarch (and this is the only context in extant Greek literature where this fragment occurs) that this use of *kephalaion* by Eupolis is a joke on Pericles's anatomy and was never intended to be taken as a serious metaphor denoting a leader. Eupolis does not in fact call Pericles the *kephalaion* of Athens, nor does Plutarch.

The only other pre-NT occurrence of *kephalaion* which LSJ cites is from Menander, another comic playwright (ca. 342–293 BC). The word occurs in the play *Perikeiromenē* (*The Girl Who Gets Her Hair Cut Short*) and involves a love triangle. Both the soldier Polemon and Moskhion love Glykera. In the relevant scene, Polemon, who is temporarily away, sends his slave Sosias to check up on Glykera who had recently moved into Moskhion's household. Daos, Moskhion's slave, sees Sosias enter the scene and exclaims:

> The hireling has arrived, [i.e., Sosias]. A sorry state of things
> Is this, yes, by Apollo absolutely so.
> Not even yet I reckon in what's chief (*kephalaion*) of all:
> If from the country soon his master [i.e. Polemon] comes again;
> How great confusion he will cause when he turns up.[30]

The *kephalaion* in this context is the "chief" or "main" difficulty of the situation and refers to "the master," Polemon, should he return unexpectedly. While the noun *kephalaion* does refer to the master, it is not a metaphor for "ruler, one with authority over," but rather refers to the master (Polemon) as the main or chief cause of the difficulties which are about to explode in the play when he discovers that his girlfriend is living in his rival's household.

All the other occurrences cited by LSJ (Lucian of Samosata, a satirist; Appian, a historian; and the Emperor Julianus) occur *after* the NT was written, and so it is nonsense to use these authors to argue that a semantic shift had occurred *prior* to the writing of the NT. Thus, Grudem's argument that there has been a semantic shift in the meaning of *kephalē* based upon the prior use of *kephalaion* is groundless.

5. Plato[31]

In classical Greek, there is *only one* passage wherein *kephalē* is alleged to mean "authority over."[32] This passage is found in Plato's *Timaeus* 44d.[33] Due to the nature of this particular passage with respect to Plato's philosophy, and also due to the fact that Plato yielded immense influence among later philosophers (both Plutarch and Philo, to be discussed later, were Platonists), this passage needs to be discussed.

In the *Timaeus*, Plato details his version of the creation of the universe. Regarding the universe, we are told that soul was created before body and was given precedence and rule over body (34c); that soul is the best part of creation, which partakes of reason and virtue (36e–37a). We are also told that the sphere is the intrinsically perfect and uniform shape, and hence was chosen by the creator to be the shape of the universe (33b). The creator then modeled the divine form after the sphere (40a–b). It is clear from the *Timaeus* that Plato believed the spherical shape to reflect the epitome of divinity and perfection. After the creator created the universe and the lesser gods, he told them to fashion mortal creatures by using the structure of the universe as a blueprint (41a–d). The gods then linked the best part of creation, the soul, to the best shape, the sphere, made the sphere a head, and they then created the body to go with the head so as to provide it with the means for movement within the physical world (44d–45a). Our sensory organs were then created so that we may experience the physical world in which we live and thereby gain knowledge by means of philosophy (47a–d). While it is true that Plato speaks of the spherical body, i.e. the head, as the most divine and ruling part (44d), a few lines later he speaks of our body which carries at its top the receptacle of our most divine and holy part which is the soul (45a). The relevant passage in *Timaeus* 44d is as follows:

> Copying the revolving shape of the universe, the gods bound the two divine orbits into a ball-shaped body, the part that we now call our head (*kephalē*). This is the most divine part of us, and master of all our other parts. They then assembled the rest of the body and handed the whole of it to the head, to be in its service.[34]

In Plato's overall philosophy, it is not the *head* (*kephalē*) which is the governor or ruler, but rather it is the *soul* (*psychē*). Soul governs the entire universe (*Phaedrus* 246c), is the only thing capable of intelligence (*Timaeus* 46d), and is immortal (*Phaedrus* 245c–e; *Republic* 608c–612a; see also the *Phaedo*). In his *Phaedrus*, Plato employs an analogy of a charioteer in order to describe the soul. Plato says that the soul is the "ruling power" (*arkhōn*) which drives the chariot, the two horses of which typify our good and bad qualities (*Phaedrus* 246a–b). Plato further states that the mind or intellect (*nous*) is the governor of the soul (*Phaedrus* 247c–d). Elsewhere, Plato explains his doctrine that the soul has three parts: reason, desire, and spirit or passion (*Republic* 435–442, 580d–581e; see also the *Timaeus* 69–73 where greater attention is given to physiological details within the scope of Plato's philosophy).

For Plato, it is clear that the soul, rather than the head itself, is the best, most divine, most holy aspect of our being; and reason, which he locates in the head of the mortal body, rules the soul. Thus, this passage in the *Timaeus* can only be fully understood in the light of Plato's overall teaching of the soul. This is a far cry from either using the word *kephalē* as a personal metaphor for "ruler" or "leader" or from understanding it as such. Nowhere

does Plato ever use *kephalē* as a personal metaphor for "ruler" or "leader." In fact, there are so far no clear and unambiguous instances in native Greek literature before the NT where *kephalē* (nor *kephalaion*, as was noted earlier) is so used. It is not a native Greek metaphor. The use of *kephalē* as a personal metaphor for "ruler" or "leader" first appears in the Septuagint (discussed below) and then only a relatively few times. If this metaphor is allegedly so common in the classical or Hellenistic periods before the NT, why are there *no clear examples* of it in the native literature of those periods?

6. Where in the Body Does the Mind Reside?

There has been some disagreement regarding the locus of the controlling part of the body in Greek literature; some modern writers claim that it was in the head (hence, "authority" is readily understandable), others in the heart, *kardia* (thus, by implication, divorcing authority from the head).[35] However, the fact of the matter is that *both* views were widely held in the ancient world. Plato located intelligence and reason in the head as was clearly seen in the above discussion. Aristotle, on the other hand, located reason in the heart.[36] Both Plato and Aristotle were highly influential philosophers. The Jewish Neo-Platonist philosopher Philo (1st century AD), interestingly enough, states quite clearly that both views were held. Note that the word *kephalē* in the following passage is used literally, not metaphorically:

> And where in the body has the mind (*nous*) made its lair? Has it had a dwelling assigned to it? Some have regarded the head (*kephalē*), our body's citadel, as its hallowed shrine, since it is about the head that the senses have their station, and it seems natural to them that they should be posted there, like bodyguards to some mighty monarch. Others contend pertinaciously for their conviction that the heart (*kardia*) is the shrine in which it is carried. (*On Dreams* 1.32)[37]

Philo apparently remained somewhat uncommitted in his own view, for on at least three occasions he refers to the "ruling principle" or "mind" as residing in either heart *or* brain (*The Sacrifices of Abel and Cain* 136, *The Worse Attacks the Better* 90, and *On the Posterity and Exile of Cain* 137), and in his *Allegorical Interpretation* (I.62) he makes the uncommitted statement that the ruling part of the soul is located in the body.

The Platonist philosopher Plutarch (ca. AD 50–120) rejected the notion that the parts of the soul could be naively placed in various parts of the body: "Or is it ridiculous to allot to local positions the status of first and intermediate and last ... so the parts of the soul must not be constrained by location or nomenclature but by their function and their proportion must be scrutinized."[38] Later still, the Skeptic philosopher Sextus Empiricus (second century AD) also acknowledges philosophers' lack of agreement: "For we see certain fluids belonging to each of the regions in which the doctrinaire thinkers believe that the commanding-faculty is located—be it the brain, the heart, or whatever part of the animal one may care to put it in."[39]

As for St. Paul, his ideas on this subject must be derived from his usage of *kardia*. From some translations of passages such as Rom 1:21 (". . . and their senseless minds (*kardia*) were darkened"

[RSV]) and 2 Cor 9:7 ("Each of you must do as he has made up his mind (*kardia*) . . ." [RSV]), it would appear that Paul held to the Aristotelian view. For an ancient Greek, the matter would boil down to one's philosophical allegiance, whether one is a Platonist, an Aristotelian, a Stoic, etc. Therefore, this issue is of no real value in determining the implied meaning(s) of *kephalē* in the NT.

7. The Septuagint (LXX)

The first clear occurrence in the Greek language of *kephalē* as a personal metaphor for leader is in the Septuagint (henceforth LXX), the translation of the Hebrew OT into Greek in the third to second centuries BC. The LXX has been invoked both as undermining the notion that *kephalē* means "authority over"[40] as well as supporting that notion.[41] The arguments basically run as follows: the Hebrew word for "head" is *ro'sh* and is also used as a personal metaphor for leaders and for those in authority. Of the approximately 180 occurrences of *ro'sh* denoting "leader" in the OT, the translators of the LXX rendered most of them into Greek as *arkhōn* (leader) or some other term denoting leaders, but *not* typically as *kephalē*. In fact, *kephalē* is only used in the LXX for *ro'sh* eight times. Such a practice clearly shows that the LXX translators understood that *kephalē* does not entail authority, otherwise they would have used it more often. Not so, says the other camp; *ro'sh* is translated as *kephalē* sixteen times, not eight. Such a practice clearly shows that *kephalē* is a common and viable metaphor for leader in Greek. Grudem states "what it actually means to have sixteen (or even eight) instances of a term used in a certain sense in the Septuagint. It is really *a rich abundance of examples*."[42]

What are we to say to these arguments, and to the fact that different numbers are invoked regarding the occurrences of *kephalē* = *ro'sh* = "leader" (eight versus sixteen)? There are several problems with using the LXX as evidence for the meanings of Greek words in general, and of *kephalē* in particular. First of all, simply counting words can be a problem. There are two modern critical editions of the LXX—Cambridge's and Göttingen's (the minor edition edited by Alfred Rahlfs)—the latter readily available from the United Bible Society. These editions are not identical. Also, there are thousands of variant readings among the many manuscripts which were used to produce these editions; hence many words, such as *kephalē*, will occur both in the main text as well as in the critical apparatus. In addition, in English translations of the Bible, the word "head" may be used in a given passage where the Greek word *kephalē* does not occur in the LXX. Grudem ran into this problem a couple of times in his original article.[43] Furthermore, scholars may not always agree on the exact connotation of a given word in a given context. Thus, the existence of various manuscript readings, various editions, and various translations all result in counting procedures being rather fuzzy.

Secondly, the LXX is a translation, not an original Greek composition, and therefore runs the risk of Hebraic influence. There are many cases of overt semantic and syntactic contamination in the LXX (i.e., the words may be Greek, but the meaning or syntactic construction is Hebrew). Indeed, J. A. L. Lee states, "The language of the LXX is plainly not normal Greek in many places."[44] Lee also states, with good reason, that one

"cannot make the bald assumption that 'the LXX made sense to Hellenistic Jews.'"[45] It is for this reason that the LXX is potentially a "biased witness," as it were. Thus, the LXX is not a *primary* Greek witness to the meaning of *kephalē* in this regard because it is a translation. Its value must be regarded as secondary, and at every point abnormalities of any kind (syntactic or semantic) must be weighed against the possibility of Hebrew influence. It is entirely possible that the relatively few occurrences of *kephalē* = *ro'sh* = "leader" (8–16 out of 180 = 4–8%) is due to an occasional literalistic translation.[46] This would explain why *kephalē* occurs so infrequently as a translation of the metaphor *ro'sh* = "leader."

On the other hand, if we assume that *kephalē* were a common and prevalent Greek metaphor for leader, then that same well-established Hebrew metaphor (*ro'sh* = "leader") should be perfectly transferable into Greek and we should expect a nearly 100% translation rate: *ro'sh* = *kephalē* (leader). However, this has simply not occurred. It strikes me as very odd that the translators of the LXX would choose to disregard a metaphor which is allegedly perfectly translatable from Hebrew to Greek, especially in light of the many literalist, and sometimes un-Greek, translations which were foisted on the Greek text of the LXX elsewhere. Those who argue for "authority" have not adequately explained this problem.

Third, there is the problem of the proper weight and value to be assigned to variant readings. Egalitarians tend to dismiss those passages in the LXX which have variations whereas traditionalists tend to include them; hence, the competing claims of eight versus sixteen occurrences of *kephalē* (leader) in the LXX. The arguments on this point from both sides are misleading. To the best of my knowledge, there are four passages which contain variant readings with *kephalē*:[47]

1) Judg 10:18: "And each of the leaders (*hoi arkhontes*) of Gilead said to his neighbor, 'Who is the man who will begin the fight against the sons of Ammon? He shall indeed be head (A: *eis kephalēn*; B: *eis arkhonta*) over all the inhabitants of Gilead.'" The manuscript Alexandrinus (A) reads "as head" while Vaticanus (B) reads "as leader."

2) Judg 11:8–9, 11 (*OSB* 11:7–8, 10): "And the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, 'That is why we have turned again to you now, that you may go with us and fight against the sons of Ammon, and be our head (A: *eis kephalēn*; B: *eis arkhonta*) over all the inhabitants of Gilead.' So Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, 'If you take me back home to fight against the sons of Ammon, and the Lord delivers them to me, I shall indeed be your head (A: *eis kephalēn*; B: *eis arkhonta*).'…Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and commander (A: *eis kephalēn eis hēgoumenon*; B: *eis kephalēn kai eis arkhēgon*) over them; and Jephthah spoke all his words before the Lord in Mizpah." The same variation appears here again. The last example (v. 11/10) is interesting in that the phrase "head and commander" is slightly different. Literally, A reads "as head as commander" while B reads "as head and as leader." The additional phrases *eis hēgoumenon* and *kai eis arkhēgon* clarify the overall meaning of this text.

3) 3 Kingdoms (1 Kgs) 8:1: the LXX text reads: "Twenty years later, when Solomon finished building the house of the Lord and his own house, King Solomon assembled all the elders of Israel in Zion, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord from of the city of David, which is Zion." Note that the word head (*kephalē*) does not even occur. However, the RSV reads in part, "Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes…." The phrase "heads (*kephalas*) of the tribes" is relegated to the apparatus in Rahlfs's text and attributed to Origen's edition of the LXX.

4) Isa 7:8–9: "But the head (*kephalē*) of Syria is Damascus [and the head of Damascus is Rezin]; nevertheless, in sixty-five years the kingdom of Ephraim will cease being a people. Also the head (*kephalē*) of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head (*kephalē*) of Samaria is Remaliah's son." In this passage, the word "head" occurs four times in English, but the Greek word *kephalē* occurs only three times in Rahlfs's edition. The section in square brackets is not printed in the LXX text, but is in the apparatus with unnamed manuscripts either deleting or including the phrase.
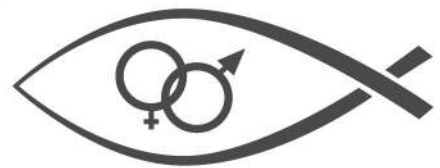
What is to be made of these variant passages? What did the translator(s) actually translate? What did the scribes actually copy? Which readings are original? The *only* way to get firm, definitive answers to these questions is to ask the translators and/or scribes themselves, but they are all long dead, so that is out of the question. Modern scholars often attempt to resolve such impossible questions by positing various scenarios to explain away one reading or the other. For example, let's suppose that *kephalē* were original; how then could *arkhōn* be substituted? Answer: perhaps some readers or scribes did not understand the metaphor, or perhaps others thought that the use of *kephalē* was un-Greek, and so someone changed it to *arkhōn* to make the passage clearer or better. On the other hand, suppose that *arkhōn* were original, how then could *kephalē* be substituted? Answer: perhaps some scribe thought that the translation was not literal enough and so changed *arkhōn* to *kephalē*. Another tactic sometimes employed by modern scholars is to play favorites with the manuscripts (A is "better" than B, so we'll adopt A's reading). Modern textual critics' reasons for adopting this or that reading are often speculative. The unfortunate fact is that we cannot ever know for certain which reading was original. Therefore, at the very least, such examples should be deemed textually uncertain and should not be blindly invoked as solid examples as if there were no problems associated with them.

There are two other passages in the LXX which have been misappropriated in support of *kephalē* as "authority over."[48] These passages are characterized by a head-tail metaphor (hence the Greek translations of *kephalē* "head" and *oura* "tail"). Because of the nature of this head-tail metaphor, any translation other than *kephalē* would render these passages incoherent.[49]

1) Deut 28:12b–13, 43–44: "You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow; and you shall rule over many nations, and they shall not rule over you. So the Lord your God will make you the head (*kephalē*) and not the tail; you shall be above only and not beneath, if you heed the commandments of the Lord your God I command you today to keep and do them ... The resident alien among you shall rise higher and higher above you, and you shall come down lower and lower. He shall lend to you, but you shall not lend to him; he shall be the head (*kephalē*), and you shall be the tail."

In these verses, the point is borrowing money, not ruling the nations. One need not borrow money from one's ruler, although one must necessarily borrow from those of higher economic status (which may of course include one's ruler). Furthermore, the head-tail metaphor is juxtaposed to statements regarding "top-bottom" or "higher-lower." The entire chapter of Deut 28 speaks of the blessings or curses which God will send upon Israel depending on their obedience or disobedience. The chapter opens with the statement: ". . . if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God to be careful to do all His commandments I command you today, then the Lord your God will set you high over all the nations of the earth" (vs. 1, *OSB*). The point of the chapter revolves around the blessings of material prosperity and the curses of material deprivation. Prominence is surely a valid issue here. If Israel obeys, they will be a prominent nation in the world; if they disobey, they will be humiliated. While leadership in world affairs often follows economic and social prosperity (but is not necessary), nowhere in

the text of Deut 28 does it expressly say that Israel will "rule" other nations; rather, material prosperity is reiterated in many ways. Authority is not a necessary entailment of the use of *kephalē* in this passage.

2) Isa 9:14–16: "So the LORD cut off from Israel head and tail, palm branch and reed in one day—the elder and honored man is the head, and the prophet who teaches lies is the tail; for those who lead this people lead them astray, and those who are led by them are swallowed up" (RSV).

The LXX version (vv. 13–14) of this passage is interesting: "So the Lord took away head (*kephalē*) and tail from Israel, great and small, in one day. The elder and those who admire persons, this is the head (*arkhē*). The prophet who teaches lawlessness, this is the tail" (*OSB*). In this particular passage, the word *kephalē* is used only once, yet the notion of authority is clearly stated by the use of the Greek word *arkhē*. Furthermore, it is clear that Isaiah identifies both "head" *and* "tail" with those in authority, the "head" being the elders and the "tail" being the lying prophets. "Authority" is thus derived from the context and the additional use of the word *arkhē*, and not merely from the word *kephalē* itself.

This leaves four LXX passages which are textually firm (no variant readings) and wherein the connotation of authority is reasonably understood:[50]

1) 2 Kingdoms (2 Sam) 22:44: "You will deliver me from the quarrels of the people; you have kept me at the head (*eis kephalēn*) of the nations. A people I have not known served me."

2) Ps 17:44 (18:43): "Deliver me from the contradictions of the people; you will establish me as the head (*eis kephalēn*)) of the Gentiles; a people I never knew served me...."

3) Jer 38:7 (31:7): "For thus says the Lord to Jacob: Rejoice and exult in the Head (*epi kephalēn*) of the nations. Make a proclamation and praise Him. Say, 'The Lord saved His people, the remnant of Israel.'"

4) Lam 1:5: "Her oppressors have become the master (*eis kephalēn*), and her enemies prosper; For the Lord humbled her because of the greatness of her ungodliness."

Thus, the value of the LXX has been overrated as evidence for *kephalē* connoting "leader" or "authority." The relatively few uses of *kephalē* as a metaphor for leader can best be explained as due to Hebrew influence. Furthermore, the connotation of "source" for *kephalē* in the LXX does not exist. It is simply inappropriate to the context of each passage mentioned here.

8. Philo[51]

Philo reiterates many of Plato's ideas regarding the soul, and many of Philo's statements regarding the soul are very similar, if not identical, to statements made by Plato in the *Timaeus* and elsewhere. For example, he refers to the "dominant" or "sovereign mind," *ho hēgemōn nous* (*On Dreams* 1.30, 44); and to the mind as being "holy" and as a "fragment of the Deity" (*On Dreams* 1.34); and he further says that "the Mind, the sovereign element of the soul ... evidently occupies a position in men precisely answering to that which the great Ruler occupies in all the world" (*On the Creation* 69; compare *Who is the Heir* 233: "In fact I regard the soul as being in man what the heaven is in the universe"). There are many other similar statements throughout Philo's writings. In assessing Philo's use of *kephalē*, one

must remember that Philo was a Neo-Platonist. One must question whether Philo is using *kephalē* literally or as a personal metaphor for "leader" or "ruler," and whether his usage of *kephalē* has more to do with his Platonic notion of divine reason as the dominant or controlling part of the soul. Philo's philosophical underpinnings can be clearly seen in two *kephalē* passages (*On Dreams* 2.207 and *Moses* 2.82). In both of these passages, *kephalē* denotes the literal head and is not a personal metaphor for "ruler, leader."[52]

Much has been made of Philo's use of *kephalē* in *Moses* 2.30 which allegedly denotes authority.[53] In this passage, Philo extols the achievements of king Ptolemy II Philadelphos (ca. 308–246 BC). Here, Philadelphos is certainly a leader, but not in terms of being the *ruler* of the Ptolemaic dynasty, for the entire dynasty had nearly died out before Philo was born; rather Philadelphos is the *leader* in terms of being the best, the most prominent, the most influential of the Ptolemaic kings. This is entirely clear in the overall context of *Moses* 2.29–30. Note that *kephalē* is used but once despite the translation:[54]

> Ptolemy, surnamed Philadelphus, was the third in succession to Alexander, the conqueror of Egypt. In all the qualities which make a good ruler, he excelled not only his contemporaries, but all who have arisen in the past; and even till to-day, after so many generations, his praises are sung for the many evidences and monuments of his greatness of mind which he left behind him in different cities and countries, so that, even now, acts of more than ordinary munificence or buildings on a specially great scale are proverbially called Philadelphian after him. To put it shortly, as the house of the Ptolemies was highly distinguished, compared with other dynasties, so was Philadelphus among the Ptolemies. The creditable achievements of this one man almost outnumbered those of all the others put together, and, as the head (*kephalē*) takes the highest place in the living body, so he may be said to head the kings.[55]

Those who claim that the notions of "ruler" or "authority over" work in this context must explain how it is possible for one dead king to rule or exercise authority over other dead kings. There is in fact no notion of authority here; rather, this passage illustrates very well the notions of prominence or preeminence as described above.

On Mating with the Preliminary Studies 61 is another disputed passage about which both sides of this debate are confused:

> And of all members of the clan here described Esau is the progenitor (*genarkhēs*), the head (*kephalē*) as it were of the whole creature—Esau whose name we sometimes interpret as "an oak," sometimes as "a thing made up."

Payne claims that *kephalē* in this passage denotes "source of life" but Grudem rejects this interpretation and maintains that "ruler, authority over" is relevant.[56] Payne's claim that Esau is the source of life of his clan is surely incorrect. The deceased Esau is not really the *source* of anything. Esau is merely the founder or progenitor of his clan, as Philo clearly states. *Kephalē* here probably has the sense

of "starting-point," referring to the fact that Esau is the beginning or founder of the Edomites, rather than "source of life."[57] Esau will always be the founder of his clan.

On the other hand, Grudem's claim that *kephalē* here means "ruler" is based on a misunderstanding of the Greek word *genarkhēs* ("progenitor"). Grudem claims that *genarkhēs* can also mean "ruler of created beings," and he cites LSJ for support. He then translates the sentence: "And Esau is the ruler of all the clan here described . . ."[58] thereby equating "ruler" with *kephalē*. In equating *kephalē* with *genarkhēs* as "ruler of created beings," Grudem has committed the same logical and semantic fallacy that Kroeger did in translating *kephalē* as "source" due to the presence of *arkhē* in that passage (see section 2 above).

Further, Grudem has simply misunderstood LSJ, according to which *genarkhēs* has two senses: "1. founder or head of a family or race; 2. ruler of created beings."[59] In the first sense, Philo uses the word to refer to humans as the founders or progenitors of their races (*Who is the Heir* 279, of Abraham; *On Dreams* 1.167, of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; *Preliminary Studies* 133, of Moses or Levi). So also in Ps.-Lycophron's (second century BC) *Alexandra* 1307 of Dardanus, the ancestor of the Dardani, a Greek tribe.[60] It should be noted that all such uses of *genarkhēs* involve a known ancestor who is obviously dead. Philo also uses the word in reference to the 70 Elders (*Moses* 1.189), and once apparently to mean "ethnarch" (*ethnarkhēs*), a magisterial title (*Flaccus* 74). In the second sense, the word invariably refers to a god (of Zeus in Callimachus *Fragment* 36 and in Babrius 142.3; of Kronos in *Orphic Hymn* 13.8; of God in the *Corpus Hermeticum* 13.21).[61]

Thus, based on these citations, most of which are in LSJ, it is most reasonable to conclude that *genarkhēs* means "progenitor" as the founder or ancestor of a tribe or people when applied to humans such as Esau who are already known to be such. This is no doubt the sense intended by Philo in *Preliminary Studies* 61, and it is correctly translated in the Loeb edition. Esau is not a "ruler of created beings" because he is clearly not a god. Rather than indicating that Esau is the ruler of his clan (which he cannot be because he is dead), the metaphorical use of *kephalē* denotes that Esau is the head, i.e. the beginning, the foremost member of his clan, just as the head is the foremost member of an animal's body. There is no connotation of "source," "rule," or "authority over" here, but rather one of "starting-point."

9. Plutarch[62]

There are several passages in Plutarch containing *kephalē* which have been alleged to mean "ruler" or "authority over." These passages have been dealt with in more detail elsewhere,[63] so I will not belabor the issues here except in summary. It must be borne in mind that Plutarch was also a Platonist and this fact has a bearing in the interpretation of his use of *kephalē*. The first four examples are taken from his *Parallel Lives*.

1) In *Agis* 2.3, *kephalē* is used literally with reference to a snake and is not a metaphor: "'Ye cannot have the same man as your ruler and your slave.' Since in this case also one certainly can apply the fable of the serpent whose tail rebelled against its head (*kephalē*) and demanded the right to lead in turn instead of always following. . . ."[64]

2) In *Pelopidas* 2.1, *kephalē* is clearly used by Plutarch as one part of a body analogy with reference to the military: "For if, as Iphicrates analyzed the matter, the light-armed troops are like the hands, the cavalry like the feet, the line of men-at-arms itself like chest and breastplate, and the general like the head (*kephalē*), then he, in taking undue risks and being over bold, would seem to neglect not himself, but all. . . ."[65] Of course, generals have authority over their troops. Plutarch is here using a metaphor, and the connotation of authority is clearly present in the overall context of the passage. Note, however, that the word *kephalē* is not used of the general independently as a metaphor.

3) In *Galba* 4.3, we see the closest parallel to the NT in that the word *kephalē* is used in conjunction with the word "body" (*sōma*) as a compound metaphor: "But after Vindex had openly declared war, he wrote to Galba inviting him to assume the imperial power, and thus to serve what was a vigorous body in need of a head (*kephalē*), meaning the Gallic provinces, which already had a hundred thousand men under arms. . . ." Here the connotation of authority is readily derivable from the military context.

4) *Cicero* 14.6: "'What dreadful thing, pray,' said [Cataline], 'am I doing, if, when there are two bodies (*sōmata*), one lean and wasted, but with a head (*kephalē*), and the other headless (*akephalos*), but strong and large, I myself become a head (*kephalē*) for this?'" Cataline (L. Sergius Catalina, a 1st century BC Roman statesman) made this statement to the Roman senate in an attempt to stir up a rebellion. Although the connotation of authority may be present here due to the context, there are two problems about this passage. First of all, Plutarch expressly states that Cataline spoke in a "riddle" (14.7), which may imply that the use of *kephalē* here was an unusual Greek idiom. Secondly, this "riddle" may have been influenced by Latin because the word *caput* (head) often *is* used as a metaphor for leader. The Latin source for this "riddle" is Cicero's speech *Pro Murena* 25, 51. Hence, Plutarch may have been translating this passage from Latin rather literally. Any fair assessment of this passage must take these factors into consideration.

5) This final example is from the *Moralia* (692D–E), "Table Talk" 6.7.1: "The ancients even went so far as to call the wine 'lees,' just as we affectionately call a person 'soul' or 'head' (*kephalē*) from his ruling part."[66] Here the word *kephalē* is again used literally, not as a metaphor. Those who claim that "authority" is relevant here forget that the word *kephalē* was a common form of address in Greek. Just as we say, "Hey, man," in addressing someone, so an ancient Greek would say *ō kephalē* (literally, "O head").[67] Furthermore, Plutarch's use of *kephalē* as the "ruling part" is surely derived from his Platonism. Remember that for Plato, the ruling part is not the head as such, but the soul which is merely located in the head.

These Plutarchian passages are of dubious value as proof that *kephalē* is an independent Greek metaphor for "ruler" or "authority over."

10. The New Testament Passages

It is clear that evangelicals disagree regarding the understanding of the *kephalē* metaphor in Paul. Grudem and others maintain that "authority" or "ruler" is Paul's point; others such as the Mickelsens, Payne, and Bilezikian maintain that "source" or "provider" is the point. Now it is true that Christ is our leader and ruler and that he does have authority over the Church, and it is also true that he is the source and provider of our salvation, our lives, our very being in as much as he is the agent of creation—all this is readily derived from Christology.

The debate really revolves around the issue of the *kephalē* metaphor: to what extent are these subsidiary issues (authority, source, provider, prominence, etc.) bound to the meaning of *kephalē*? It is my belief that those who have previously written about the meaning of *kephalē* in the NT have made too much of what I consider to be a rather simple head-body metaphor by reading into one part of that metaphor meanings that are at best only implications that can be derived from the immediate context of a given passage. All living creatures have heads, and the head is typically the uppermost part of the body. Decapitated bodies are dead bodies. It would be senseless for Paul to speak of the Church as the headless body of Christ.

With the explanation of prominence that I gave above in mind (see section 3 above), let us now examine the NT passages where someone (usually Christ) is called *kephalē*. Although there are many difficulties in some of the following passages, it is not my intent to provide a detailed exegesis of each one, but rather to explain how the notions of "source," "authority," or "prominence" may be relevant.

The first point that should be noted is that in five of the seven passages (Eph 1:22f., 4:15f., 5:22; Col 1:18, 2:19), the word *sōma* (body) is present. The Church is the body and Christ is the head of that body. In these passages, Paul's use of the words *kephalē* and *sōma* go together to form a composite metaphor (compare Plutarch's *Pelopidas* 2.1 and *Galba* 4.3 above). Only in 1 Cor 11:3 and Col 2:10 does Paul use *kephalē* apart from *sōma* as an independent metaphor.[68]

1) Eph 1:20–23: ". . . which [God] accomplished in Christ when he raised him from the dead and made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule (*arkhē*) and authority (*exousia*) and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come; and he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head (*kephalē*) over all things for the Church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all."

While I will not deny that authority is a relevant issue in this passage, the question is whether authority is the *primary* connotation here, derived from the word *kephalē* itself. It is certainly wrong to dismiss the notions of prominence and preeminence in this passage inasmuch as God the Father has set Christ at His right hand "far above" all rule, etc. Just as the head is above the physical body, so Christ is above everything in creation. Christ is also preeminent in the sense of being supreme. I fail to see how either of these notions could be denied in this passage, and I likewise fail to see why authority *must* be considered the primary connotation. We also see here the notion of topness quite clearly. This passage very nicely fits the semantic scenario I described above (see section 3 above). On the other hand, the connotation of source does not fit the context at all. It makes no sense to say that Christ is the "source *over*" (*hyper*) all things in the Church.

2) Eph 4:15–16: "Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head (*kephalē*), into Christ, from whom the whole body (*sōma*), joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love."

In this passage, I think that both the Mickelsens' connotation of "source" and Bilezikian's of "provider" may be applicable, but I do not believe that those notions can be derived from the semantic range of the word *kephalē* itself. The connotation of "source" may be implied in the prepositional phrase "from whom" (*ex hou*)[69] and the overall tenor of the passage may speak of Christ as the provider of the body's growth. Interestingly, although I disagree, Grudem admits that the sense "source of life" is possible for *kephalē* in Philo's *Preliminary Studies* 61.[70] If this connotation can be admitted in Philo, why can it not be admitted elsewhere, or here, if it is appropriate to the context? This is not to deny Christ's authority. I just do not think that the connotation of authority is *necessarily* explicit in the metaphor in this passage.

3) Eph 5:21–24: "Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head (*kephalē*) of the wife as Christ is the head (*kephalē*) of the Church, his body, and is himself its Savior. As the Church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands."

The notion of authority is clearly implied *in this context* by the presence of the verb *hypotassomai* ("to submit"—not *hypotassō*, "to subjugate"), even though the connotation of authority is not always present in the meaning of this verb. As with all Greek words, *hypotassō /-omai* has a range of meanings, some of which have nothing to do with authority (e.g. "to place under," cf. 1 Cor 15:27 and Eph 1:22, "to append," etc.).[71]

Despite the punctuation of various Greek editions and English translations, it is not in fact clear whether v. 21 stands at the end of a paragraph or at the beginning of a paragraph, nor is it even clear that there is a paragraph break at this point. Verse 21 contains an admonition to mutual submission, and this applies to husbands by implication. True, Paul does not *expressly* tell husbands to submit to their wives; but neither does he *expressly* tell wives to love their husbands (cf. v. 25). Are we then justified in concluding that wives need not love their husbands? Certainly not! Submission is a relevant issue in Eph 5, but it is not simply a matter of wives submitting to husbands. BDAG cites this passage along with a few others as examples "of submission in the sense of voluntary yielding in love" (848). The details of the implications of submission in the NT are a matter for further discussion and interpretation, and lie outside the scope of this paper. In this passage, the notion of authority is not derived from the word *kephalē*, but rather than from the overall context.

4) Col 1:17–18: "He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head (*kephalē*) of the body (*sōma*), the Church; he is the beginning (*arkhē*), the first-born from the dead, that in everything he might be pre-eminent (*prōteuōn*)."

This passage speaks of Christ as being the "firstborn" of the dead, and as having the "first-place" in everything. Preeminence

(*prōteuōn*) is obviously relevant here and is so translated by Tyndale in the KJV and in the NKJV. Again, we have the head-body metaphor. Christ will occupy the most exalted place, which is the topmost place, just as the head occupies the topmost or prominent place with respect to the body. Of course Christ necessarily possesses authority, but I reiterate that the point of this discussion is whether the word *kephalē* denotes authority in and of itself, or whether authority is derivable primarily from the context. I claim that the latter is true.

5) Col 2:18–19: "Let no one disqualify you, insisting on self-abasement and worship of angels, taking his stand on visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, and not holding fast to the Head (*kephalē*), from whom the whole body (*sōma*), nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God."

This passage has a number of similarities to Eph 4:15–16, and I think that the notion of source or source of life may be an implication derivable solely from the context. Authority may or may not be applicable here. In the overall context of Col 2, Paul is warning his readers against going off the doctrinal deep end and of becoming "puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind" rather than "holding fast to the head." It seems reasonable to me to interpret this passage in terms of a head-body metaphor. The body, the Church, is sustained by the head, Christ, and one risks one's life in abandoning the head. The implication is that the Christian will not survive apart from Christ just as members of our human bodies will not survive if they are cut off from our bodies.

The final two NT passages contain *kephalē* as an independent metaphor, not joined with the body (*sōma*).

6) 1 Cor 11:3–5: "But I want you to understand that the head (*kephalē*) of every man is Christ, the head (*kephalē*) of a woman is her husband, and the head (*kephalē*) of Christ is God. Any man who prays or prophesies with his head covered (*kata kephalēs ekhōn*) dishonors his head (*kephalē*), but any woman who prays or prophesies with her head (*kephalē*) unveiled dishonors her head (*kephalē*)—it is the same as if her head were shaven."

Only in v. 3 is *kephalē* used (thrice) as a metaphor. In vv. 4 and 5, it is used literally (although some expositors press a metaphorical meaning[72]). Despite the numerous exegetical problems with this passage, I think that both connotations of authority and prominence may be relevant here. Both the Greco-Roman culture and the Jewish culture of the first century were indisputably male-dominant. Males had decided advantages over females in nearly every respect, legally, socially, politically, etc. If Paul's words here are taken as a reflection of such a cultural attitude, the idea of prominence does not seem to me to be wholly irrelevant, nor does authority. Males were prominent with regard to females and exercised authority over them; in the same way, Christ is prominent with regard to humans. I doubt that a first century mind would have had as much difficulty understanding this comparison as we do today.

What about "source" here? At first blush, "source" may look possible, but as Hurley has explained, it runs into trouble because of St. Paul's parallelism. If *kephalē* means "source" here, then God becomes the source of Christ and this implication has

serious repercussions for Christology.[73] I seriously doubt that "source" is a viable option in this passage.

7) Col 2:9–10: "For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fullness of life in him, who is the head (*kephalē*) of all rule (*arkhē*) and authority (*exousia*)."

This passage has some similarities to Eph 1:20–23. The notion of authority may be present, but so are prominence and preeminence. Again, the question is which notion, if any, is primary? It is unlikely that "source" is applicable in this context because that would make Christ the source of "every ruler and authority" and that does not make much sense in this context.

In most of the NT passages, authority is implied within the overall context, as are prominence or preeminence. In two passages (Eph 4:15–16 and Col 2:18–19), "source" may be possible due to the context and depending on how the passages are interpreted. However, neither "authority" nor "source" is the *primary* meaning of the *kephalē* metaphor throughout Paul's writings.

Conclusion

What then does *kephalē* mean? The answer is easy: the literal head. What then of the connotations and metaphorical extensions of *kephalē*? How does one explain them (references to tops of mountains, trees, waves; sources or mouths of rivers; and so forth)? The most comprehensive explanation, as Chadwick has also pointed out, is that *kephalē*, as the topmost part of the body, was extended to refer to the tops of things (hence, "top" or "summit" of mountains, etc.), or the ends of things (hence, "source" or "mouth" of rivers). This is in full accord with my explanation in section 3 above, which I arrived at independently of Chadwick.

In pre-biblical Greek (archaic, classical, early Hellenistic), the word *kephalē* is hardly used as a personal metaphor at all, and does *not* mean "source" or "ruler" or "authority over." Furthermore, any claim that these are "common" meanings or implications for *kephalē* during these periods is empirically wrong. Also, the argument that *kephalē* later took on its connotation of authority from the noun *kephalaion* ("sum, total, chief") is false.

The use of *kephalē* as a personal metaphor first occurs in the LXX, and that usage is most likely due to Hebraic influence because (1) it is used thus relatively infrequently (about 11 of about 180 occurrences = 6%) and (2) the existence of several variants (*kephalē* or *arkhōn*) in some manuscripts testify that there was uncertainty about the metaphor in Greek at some point. In Hellenistic, *non*-biblical Greek, *kephalē* is sometimes used with literal reference, but as a simile. Any possible connotations of prominence or authority are derived only from a given context, although topness is the only implication which is relevant across the board. The notion of source is inapplicable. Claims that "source" or "ruler" are valid meanings of *kephalē* are often based upon mistranslations or misappropriations of other Greek words present in a given context (e.g., *arkhē* "beginning" not "source" or *genarkhēs* "progenitor" not "ruler").

It has been suggested that St. Paul was thinking in Hebrew or Aramaic while writing in Greek and that he intended *kephalē* to denote either "source" or "authority over." Given the excellent quality of Paul's Koine Greek and the apparent ease with which he functioned in Greco-Roman culture, I seriously doubt that he

found it necessary to think in Hebrew while composing Greek, and I also doubt whether native Greeks of the period would have clearly understood the *kephalē* metaphor in these senses. Any claim that they would have done so is as yet far from vindicated. I close with his warning to Timothy: "Remind them of this, and charge them before the Lord to avoid disputing about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers" (2 Tim 2:14).

Notes

1. This article appeared in a special edition CBE journal, titled "Missing Voices" and edited by Hilary Ritchie, in the fall of 2014. The 2014 version, which used a Greek font instead of transliteration and contained significantly more Greek text in the endnotes, is available at www.CBEInternational.org. The 2014 article was, in turn, an expansion and revision of the author's 1991 article, "*Peri tou kephalē*: A Rejoinder to Wayne Grudem," also distributed by CBE.

2. Berkeley Mickelsen and Alvera Mickelsen, "What Does *kephalē* Mean in the New Testament?" in *Women, Authority, and the Bible*, ed. A. Mickelsen (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1986), 97–110; and the "Response" to that article in the same volume by P. B. Payne, 118–32. See also G. Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), esp. pp. 215–51; and C. C. Kroeger, "The Classical Concept of *Head* as 'Source,'" appendix III in *Equal to Serve*, by G. G. Hull (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell, 1987), 267–83.

3. W. Grudem, "Does *kephalē* ('Head') Mean 'Source' or 'Authority Over' in Greek Literature? A Survey of 2,336 Examples," *TJ* 6 NS (1985): 38–59. This article was reprinted as appendix I of *The Role Relationship of Men and Women: New Testament Teaching*, by G. W. Knight III (rev. ed., Chicago: Moody, 1985), 49–80. Grudem then published "The Meaning of *Kephalē* ('Head'): A Response to Recent Studies," *TJ* 11 NS (1990): 3–72. This article was also republished as appendix 1 in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (ed. J. Piper and W. Grudem; Wheaton: Crossway, 1991), 425–68. All references to Grudem's articles in this paper are to the appendices in the aforementioned books. See also J. A. Fitzmyer, "Another Look at *kephalē* in I Corinthians 11.3," *NTS* 35 (1989): 503–11; and J. B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 163–67.

4. R. S. Cervin, "Does *kephalē* Mean 'Source' or 'Authority Over' in Greek Literature? A Rebuttal," *TJ* 10 NS (1989): 85–112. I have also written "*Peri tou kephalē*: A Rejoinder to Wayne Grudem" (© 1991) which is a technical rejoinder to Grudem's "Response." See also J. Chadwick's discussion of *kephalē* in *Lexicographica Graeca: Contributions to the Lexicography of Ancient Greek* (Oxford: University Press, 1996), 177–83.

5. In the various articles that I have consulted while researching this topic, I have seen too many occurrences of erroneous citations and references to ancient authors. At times, the word *kephalē* is not even used in Greek although the word "head" may have appeared in some English translation; at other times the original context is irrelevant to the topic at hand; and sometimes the reference is simply wrong, making it difficult, if not impossible, to verify the citation.

6. For further details see S. Ullmann, *Semantics, an Introduction to the Science of Meaning* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1979); G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University Press, 1980). For a thorough and technical introduction to the field of semantics see J. Lyons, *Semantics*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: University Press, 1977). For applications of linguistics to biblical studies, see J. Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: University Press, 1961; repr. by SCM, 1983); P. Cotterell and M. Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1989); J. P. Louw, *Semantics of New Testament Greek* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1982); Moisés Silva, *Biblical Words and their Meaning* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983) and *God, Language and Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990).

7. Of course, *ruler* has other denotations such as "measuring stick," but these are irrelevant to this discussion.

8. *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 4th ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), 1104.

9. The meanings of words may change drastically over a relatively short period of time. The English word *gay* is a good example. The old connotation of the *gay* (18)90's ("carefree, happy") is completely different from the modern connotation of the *gay* (19)90's (re: homosexual rights). It took less than a century for this change to come about. Many young people today have no understanding of the older meaning of *gay* as "happy."

10. For details regarding the history of the Greek language, see the following: L. R. Palmer, *The Greek Language* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980); R. Browning, *Medieval and Modern Greek*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: University Press, 1983); G. Horrocks, *Greek: A History of the Language and its Speakers* (London: Longman, 1997).

11. One need only read Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* or several of Plato's dialogues (e.g., *Republic, Timaeus, Phaedo*) to see this.

12. C. C. Kroeger, "The Classical Concept of *Head* as 'Source'" (see note 2 above).

13. It may be true that some Greek philosophers conceived of the *head* as the "source" or "origin" of this or that bodily or cognitive function; and yes, Athena was borne of Zeus' head, but the fact remains that *kephalē* is *not* used as a metaphor for "source" or "origin" in the majority of Greek authors so cited.

14. For a fuller discussion, see Grudem, "Head," 51–61; Cervin, "Rebuttal," 89–94; Grudem, "Response," 432–34, 453–57.

15. The translation is mine; the text is in O. Kern, *Orphicorum Fragmenta* (Berlin: Weidman, 1922), 91ff.

16. LSJ, p. 252 and the *Revised Supplement*, 53; there are also several other meanings listed which are not relevant to this discussion.

17. See Chadwick, *Lexicographica Graeca*, 183, wherein this passage is cited.

18. D. Grene, trans., *The History: Herodotus* (Chicago: University Press, 1987), 314. The Greek text is in C. Hude, *Herodoti Historiae*. 3rd ed. 2 vols. (Oxford: University Press, 1927). Also published in LCL.

19. See Chadwick, *Lexicographica Graeca*, 181, wherein this passage is cited.

20. Grudem, "Response," 447–48.

21. H. G. Liddell, R. Scott, and H. S. Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed., with Supplement (Oxford: University Press, 1968). *A Revised Supplement*, ed. by P. G. W. Glare, was published in 1996.

22. J. H. Thayer. *The New Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. (1890; repr. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1979), 345.

23. G. Kittel, ed. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 3:674.

24. J. P. Louw and E. Nida. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), 1:739.

25. Grudem, "Response," 448, italics his.

26. See also Chadwick's discussion of *kephalē* in *Lexicographica Graeca*, 177–83. Chadwick's discussion supports my contention regarding "prominence," but nowhere does he acknowledge either the notions of "source" or "authority over" as valid extensions of the word *kephalē*. My explanation here (© 1991, see notes 1 and 4 above) is independent of Chadwick's (1996).

27. Grudem, "Head," 79; Grudem, "Response," 449, 453–54. Grudem erroneously identifies the word in question as the adjective *kephalaios*; however, LSJ's treatment of the noun *kephalaion* is listed as a sub-entry under the heading of *kephalaios*.

28. Following are the citations in LSJ, 945: Eupolis, Fragment 93, 5th century BC; Menander, Perikeiromene 173, ca. 342–292 BC; Lucian of Samosata, Harmonides 3, ca. 120–200 AD; Gallus 24, Philopseudes 6, Piscator 14; Appian, Bella Civilia 5.50 and 5.43, ca. 100–160 AD; Julianus Imperator, Orationes 3.125d, 331–363 AD. The Greek texts and English translations for all these authors except Eupolis are available in the Loeb Classical Library series.

29. B. Perrin, et al. *Plutarch's Lives*, 11 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914–26), 3:9. For a discussion of and comment on the Greek text of Eupolis's fragment, see J. M. Edmonds. *The Fragments of Attic Comedy*, 4 vols. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1957), 1:348.

30. From the Loeb edition; see also F. H. Sandbach, ed. *Menander: Reliquiae Selectae*, rev. ed. (Oxford: University Press, 1990).

31. The Greek text can be found in I. Burnet, ed., *Platonis Opera*, 5 vols. (Oxford: University Press, 1900–07). The English edition I have quoted in this article is by J. M. Cooper, ed., *Plato: Complete Works* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997). Other English translations of Plato's works can be found in the Penguin Classics Series, LCL, and elsewhere.

32. There is a passage in Herodotus' *Histories* (7.148) containing *kephalē* which is also alleged to mean "authority over," but the use of *kephalē* there is literal, not metaphorical. See Cervin, "Rebuttal," 94–95.

33. The traditional method of citing Plato is to use section numbers along with the letters *a–e* which denote the subsection. All Greek texts of Plato as well as any decent English translation include these numbers in the margin.

34. Cooper, *Plato: Complete Works*, 1248. The word *kephalē* is used only once by Plato in this passage, as noted above.

35. Payne, "Response," 119–20; Grudem, "Head," 54–55 and "Response," 539, n. 60.

36. *De Motu Animalium* ("Movement of Animals") 10.703a; *De Partibus Animalium* ("Parts of Animals") III.10.672b; see Jonathan Barnes, ed., *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, 2 vols. (Princeton: University Press, 1984).

37. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker, trans., *Philo*, vol. 5 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1934), 311, 313.

38. "Platonic Questions," IX.2 = *Moralia* 1008E–1009A, in A H. Cherniss, trans., *Plutarch's Moralia*. vol. XIII, Pt. I (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 99, 101.

39. Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism,* 1.124–28, quoted in A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: University Press, 1987), 1:480. The Greek text is located in 2:468–69.

40. Mickelsens, "What Does *Kephalē* Mean in the New Testament?" 101–4; and Payne, "Response," 121–24.

41. Grudem, "Response," 450–53.

42. Grudem, "Response," 452 (emphasis mine).

43. Grudem claimed that *kephalē* occurred twice in an English passage in Herodotus where the word was used only once in Greek. So also, in Isa 9:13–14 (LXX); see Cervin, "Rebuttal," 94, 98.

44. J. A. L. Lee, *A Lexical Study of the Septuagint Version of the Pentateuch* (Chico: Scholars, 1983), 1. See Lee's chs. 1 and 2 for an excellent overview of the quality of LXX Greek. For additional critiques of the nature of LXX Greek, see S. Jellicoe, *The Septuagint and Modern Study*, ch. 10 (Oxford: University Press, 1968; repr. Eisenbrauns, 1993); H. B. Swete, *An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek*, ch. 4, rev. by R. R. Ottley (Cambridge: University Press, 1914; repr. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1989); and G. A. Deissmann, *Bible Studies*, trans. A. Grieve, ch. 3 (T & T Clark, 1901; repr. Winona Lake: BMH, 1979).

45. Lee, *Lexical Study*, 18.

46. So also Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, 239.

47. The OT translations which follow are from the *Orthodox Study Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008), which is based largely on Rahlfs's Greek edition of the LXX text. The letters A and B denote the Greek manuscripts Alexandrinus and Vaticanus respectively.

48. Grudem, "Response," 451–52.

49. So the Mickelsens, "What Does *Kephalē* Mean in the New Testament?" 103.

50. Translations are taken from the *Orthodox Study Bible*; references are to that text and references in parentheses are to the Hebrew Masoretic Text.

51. The only readily available Greek text of Philo is in LCL: F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker, trans., *Philo*, 12 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927–1962). All Philo citations are from this edition.

52. See Grudem, "Head," 73; Cervin, "Rebuttal," 99–100; and Grudem, "Response," 441.

53. Grudem, "Response," 442ff.

54. See also Cervin, "Rebuttal," 99ff.

55. Philo, *Moses* 2.29–30.

56. Payne, "Response," 124; Grudem, "Response," 454ff.

57. See Chadwick, *Lexicographica Graeca*, 183, for the sense of "starting-point" for *kephalē*.

58. Grudem, "Response," 454.

59. LSJ, 342, but see the *Revised Supplement*, 75, for corrections and revisions.

60. The text is in LCL.

61. Callimachus was a Greek poet (ca. 305–240 BC). The text can be found in R. Pfeiffer, *Callimachus*, 2 vols. (Oxford: University Press, 1949), 1:223–24 (no. 229). Babrius (first to second centuries AD) was a Roman poet who put some of Aesop's fables into Greek verse; the text is in LCL. The text and translation of the Orphic Hymns are found in A. N. Athanassakis, *The Orphic Hymns* (Chico: Scholars, 1977), 22–23. The *Corpus Hermeticum* is a treatise of religious and philosophical doctrine dating from about the second century AD. The text, translation, and notes are in W. Scott, *Hermetica*, 4 vols. (London: Dawsons of Pall Mall, 1968), 1:254. The only citation listed in LSJ that I have been unable to check is the inscription IG 5 (1).497, which LSJ state refers to Heracles, a demigod.

62. The only readily available Greek text of Plutarch is also in LCL: B. Perrin, et al., trans., *Plutarch's Lives*, 11 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914–1926); F. C. Babbitt, et al., trans., *Moralia*, 15 vols. (Harvard University Press, 1927–1969). All citations from Plutarch are taken from this edition.

63. See Grudem, "Head," 74–5; Cervin, "Rebuttal," 101–4; and Grudem, "Response," 429, 439, 441, 444.

64. *Agis* 2.3.

65. *Pelopidas* 2.1.

66. *Table Talk* 6.7.1 (*Moralia* 692d-e).

67. LSJ, 945; see also Chadwick, *Lexicographica Graeca*, 179ff.

68. The following translations are taken from the RSV, Second Catholic Edition.

69. LSJ, 499, definition III; see also BDAG, 296, definition 3, for this and related senses.

70. Grudem, "Response," 454.

71. See LSJ, 1897 and BDAG, 1042, for examples and references.

72. For references to non-literal interpretations, see S. D. Hull, "Exegetical Difficulties in the 'Hard Passages,'" Appendix II in G. G. Hull, *Equal to Serve* (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell, 1987), 253.

73. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective*, 163–67.

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