I'd also like to know what your group decided about affiliating with John Stott's organization, Men, Women, and God.

Washington, D.C.

I read with interest and growing excitement the article on "Discovering Biblical Equality in Minnesota" (ESA Update).

I'm working as a social change advocate for Freedom House, an ecumenical "house of hospitality" for the homeless of Richmond, VA. Women's issues such as equality, roles in the church, etc. are issues that I often come up against, and I have yet to establish a position that I feel is a just and healthy one. I'm often uncomfortable with the militant attitude of many feminists, although in many ways I'm a "feminist" myself.

Elaine Storkey's view of "Christian mutuality" sounds refreshing and exciting to me, and much more consistent with my beliefs in peacemaking and social justice.

I'd appreciate any information listing of resources that you have.

Richmond, VA

An Illustration of the Greek Notion of "Head" as "Source"

by Catherine Kroeger

Many of our readers write to ask for new insights, information, and resources about biblical feminism. The Chinese say that one peep is worth ten thousand words. Cindy McKeen kindly supplied us with the accompanying illustration; and for those anxious for new material, it may well be worth its weight in gold. The statuette which the drawing depicts does not strike one as a first-class piece of art. To be quite truthful, it seems somewhat clumsy; and the concept of one woman standing upon the head of another is downright grotesque. Nevertheless, this piece and the forty-odd similar executions of this same motif have much to tell us. Usually two which were almost identical were found together, but there are differences in form and decoration between those found in different grave-sites. Always the woman stood within the crown upon the lower female head.

Terracotta statuettes of this design were placed in tombs, much as we might place a floral offering upon a grave to-day. The burials took place about three hundred years before the birth of Christ, in an area of southern Italy where Greek colonists embraced Pythagoreanism and Orphism. The same tombs contained lovely examples of traditional Greek art, graceful and well executed; and some of these fine works of art came from the very same workshops which had created pieces similar to that in our illustration.

Archaeologists soon realized that the strange little statues, so inferior to other objects in the tomb hordes, contained a religious message, rather than an artistic one. Oddly, the upper figure was delicately draped in the fashion of the charming Tanagran style of terracottas, while the lower head was more crude - "semi-archaic," as one archaeologist put it. The colors on the upper figure were subtle and muted, those on the lower head more garish. The marked contrast seemed to indicate two different realms of existence.

Greek tombs in southern Italy, especially around the town of Canosa, abounded in objects which portrayed the religious beliefs of the community. They are valuable because they reveal some of the secrets of the so-called mystery religions which promised salvation and immortality to the initiates. Many of these highly ornamented vessels and statues portrayed the voyage of the soul to celestial regions, and one especially famous vase from Canosa showed the arrival of the blessed dead at the throne of Hades and Persephone in the underworld. It was this vase upon which the German scholar Bachofen based his study of ancient Orphism.

In the genre of statuary here illustrated, the lower head appears to be that of Persephone, goddess of the underworld. Many of you may remember the story of how she was kidnapped by Hades, king of the realm of the dead. Her mother, Demeter, the grain goddess mourned and would not cause anything to grow upon the earth until her daughter was returned. Each year Persephone divided her time between the world of the dead and the world above, where her advent caused plant-life to grow. Many vases from southern Italy show the head of Persephone rising up out of the ground as she returns and brings with her a return of vegetation.

Persephone caused other kinds of life to sprout up on the earth as well. The Greek poet Pindar wrote that she sent the spirits of the righteous dead up into the light of the sun in the ninth year after their death. The wreath about the head of the goddess is here composed of leaves, an indication of the fertility which she brings. Other leaves are being pushed up, unfolding in the fashion of budding plants; and from within this verdure emerge tiny human heads. Within the crown on the top of the head stands the full figure of a woman. This apparently represents the soul of the dead person. In certain instances, the individual with whom the piece was buried was definitely a woman. In other cases, the gender of the dead person is not known. The piece was intended as a sort of consolation message for the dead person, promising a return to this life after nine years in Persephone's bosom.

Ancient texts buried with skeletons in southern Italy reveal the belief that at death the properly initiated soul "stepped within the lovely crown," sank beneath the bosom of the Persephone, and thereby became divine instead of mortal. The goddess both received...
souls and sent them forth again. As we mentioned, the
statuettes of this genre are usually found in doublets,
and in one instance a foursome. In some cases the face
on the lower head is raised upwards, and the arms of
the standing woman are lifted as though in expectation
of new life, while the duplicate piece will have a more
downward direction. Persephone, goddess of the un­
derworld, was perceived as the beginning and the end of
life, but these statuettes reveal a naive conception that
the avenue to and from this world lay through her
head.

In the same manner, Orphic poems speak of “Zeus
the head, Zeus the middle, and in Zeus all things have
their consummation.” Now this is valuable because
quite clearly “head” is used in the sense of “beginning”
or “source.” In fact, sometimes the ancients quoted this
very line and substituted the word “beginning” (arche
) for “head” (kephale ). The verse was intended to
demonstrate the all-inclusive character of Zeus, but it
began with him as “head” or “source.”

The belief that the head was source was widespread
among the Greeks and Romans. It was even consid­
ered the seat of the soul and the source from which
other parts of the body grew. (For a comparable idea
see Eph. 4:15-16 and Col. 1:19.) The head was the
well-spring of all moisture, and the source of a river
was called its head. Even human sperm was thought to
be produced in the brain and to descend through the
spinal column to further human life. Pythagoreans for­
bade their adherents to eat the head of an animal be­
cause this was the generative part from which they
themselves might once have originated in a prior inca­
nation. According to a favorite myth, Athena sprang
full-grown from the head of Zeus. The head of Orphe­
us, though severed from the rest of his body, had con­tinued to utter prophecies, and the heads of Publius,
Archonides, and a priest of Zeus Hoplosmios.

Among the Greeks, “head” seldom, if ever, denoted
the concept of “chief” or “boss.” The ancients them­
selves defined “head” as indicating “origin” or
“source.” In terms of the headship passages in the
Bible, this has important theological connotations. Ath­
anasius and others insisted that “head” must be under­
stood as “source” rather than “boss” lest one arrive at a
faulty understanding of the Trinity. The Son and Holy
Spirit proceed forth from the Father but are equal with
Him in goodness, power, and love.

We can understand I Cor. 11:1-3 to mean that the
Son proceeds forth from God the Father, that every
man has Christ as his Source and that woman was
drawn forth from man (I Cor. 11:8,12). The typical
Greek view was that woman was a subhuman species
of monster, made of an inferior substance and deserv­
ing to be treated as an inferior. The biblical insistence
that the source of woman lay in man means that wom­
an is fully human and fully equal because she partakes
of the same substance as man, “bone of his bone and
flesh of his flesh.” She too is made in God’s image
(Genesis 5:1-3).
Christ as Head and Source of the Church supplies to His Body nourishment and tender care, as should a husband for his wife (Eph. 5:29). The wife in turn must respect him and return the self-sacrificing love which he freely gives.

Those interested in academic documentation and further development of the foregoing material are referred to Gretchen Gaebelein Hull's book, Equal to Serve, forthcoming from Revell this summer.

Since the biblical concept of Christ as Head of the Church and of husband as head of the wife is a very controversial one, we wonder if our readers would be interested in a small book which would reprint a collection of articles on headship. Do you have suggestions for works to be included, a title, and at approximately what price it should be made available? Please send your ideas and comments to the North Central Center for Christian Studies. PP

Names and numbers of the players, please.

Many of you are justifiably confused by the groups at work upon the formation of a new organization which will support the equality and ministry of women on a biblical basis. We offer the following identifications:

North Central Center for Christian Studies - A center for research and teaching, (on the biblical status of women, evangelism, and other Christian topics) founded three years ago by Richard and Catherine Kroeger. It currently sponsors some of the preliminary efforts to form a new organization. Priscilla Papers - a newsletter put out by the North Central Center. Its subject is the equality and ministry of women within a perspective of the authority and inspiration of Scripture. For a subscription, send $6 to the North Central Center, 2160 Edgebrook Ave, St. Paul, MN, 55119.

Men, Women, and God - an English organization which grew out of John Stott's London Institute for Contemporary Christianity and the Evangelical Alliance. Leaders include Elaine Storkey, Mary Evans, David and Marlene Cohen. Several concerned Americans will meet with the group in London on August 6 in hopes of establishing an affiliation.

Christians for Biblical Equality - a group of Minnesota women and men who wanted to establish a new organization to further the equality and ministry of women. This group, together with the North Central Center, sponsored a conference featuring Elaine Storkey. Afterwards a convening assembly was called and a temporary steering committee formed to explore affiliate membership with Men, Women, and God.

The temporary steering committee is at work on a statement of faith, constitution, and statement of purpose to be presented for approval to the parent organization in England. Hopefully these documents will be ratified by the temporary steering committee when it meets August 27-28. PP

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Priscilla Papers
North Central Center for Christian Studies
2160 Edgebrook Avenue
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