

Seminar on the Holy Spirit – Greg Kalyvas  
Tongues as a Problem  
Wednesday, September 14, 2016

### C. Tongues as a Problem

The problems in Corinth stemmed largely from idol worship, especially of Bacchus/Dionysus (1 Corinthians 12:2). This created a great deal of ignorance and insensitivity toward God and others.

1. SEXUAL IMMORALITY 1 Corinthians 5-6

Sexual immorality in general was not condemned. “The great festivals, though religious in origin, are used . . . for the natural promiscuity of humanity; sexual license on such occasions is condoned.” Durant, *The Story of Civilization, Vol. 2, pg. 299*.

2. MARRIAGE 1 Corinthians 7:3

Homosexual practice was now brought into a clear battle with marriage commitment. “Therefore let marriage be for all, but let the love of boys remain alone the privilege of the wise, for a perfect virtue is absolutely unthinkable in women . . .” Licht, *Sexual Life in Ancient Greece, pg. 491*.

3. SACRIFICING ANIMALS 1 Corinthians 8:7

“Mourning for Dionysus' death and joyful celebration of his resurrection, formed the basis of a ritual extremely widespread among the Greeks. In springtime, when the vine was bursting into blossom, Greek women went up into the hills to meet the reborn god. For two days, they drank without restraint, and considered him witless who would not lose his wits. They marched in wild procession, led by Maenads, or mad women, devoted to Dionysus; they listened tensely to the story they knew so well, of the suffering, death, and resurrection of their god; and as they drank and danced they fell into a frenzy in which all bonds were loosed. The height and center of their ceremony was to seize upon a goat, a bull, sometimes a man; to tear the live victim to pieces in commemoration of Dionysus' dismemberment; then to drink the blood and eat the flesh in a sacred communion whereby, as they thought, the god would enter them and possess their souls. In that divine enthusiasm . . . they termed their state an *ecstasis*, a going out of their souls to meet and be one with Dionysus; thus they felt freed from the burden of the flesh, they acquired divine insight, they were able to prophesy, they were gods.”\* Durant, *Vol. 2, pg. 187*.

\*See Acts 15:29

4. SHAVED HEADS 1 Corinthians 11:3-16

		HEAD		ISSUE		JUDGMENT		MESSAGE		RESPONSE	
COVERING	Physical	Spiritual	ISSUE	Natural	Spiritual	MESSAGE	RESPONSE				
Inappropriate	Shaved	Dishonors Divine Order & Husband	Inward Disgrace with Outward Sign	Against Nature	Improper	Disrespect (31-32, & without authority)	Wear Veil (until hair grows back)				
Appropriate	Hair	Honors Divine Order & Husband	Inward Grace with Outward Sign	Consistent with Nature	Proper	Respect (She judges herself)	Glory (She still may choose to cover her head)				

The significance of the covering is to communicate the respect for divine order and hierarchy exemplified through the Trinity (11:3). These things are to be appreciated for their influence on the heart and attitudes of the mind (11:27-32). Without discernment, they deteriorate into contention (11:16) and mere externals. Yet, Paul is concerned that outward bearing correspond to inward being. Women weren't to pray or prophesy *in the Spirit* publicly, while at the same time fighting against nature and divine order. The reference to "angels" in verse 10 reinforces the connection between this section and the events in Genesis 1-3. See Jude 6. The first rebellion was angelic (Isaiah 14; Ezekiel 28) which carried over to the Fall (Genesis 3:15). The proximity of angels, fallen and good, in the presence of God shouldn't surprise us. Revelation 12 documents the angelic struggle played out through Herod as he tries to kill Jesus as an infant. Satan masquerades as an angel of light who is eager to seize upon the sinful nature (2 Corinthians 11:3-4). Good angels work on our behalf (Hebrews 1:14), are God's messengers (Acts 7:53; Hebrews 2:2-3), and do his bidding (Acts 10:3, 12:7, 27:23).

5. **DRUNKEN FEASTS** 1 Corinthians 11:20-21

“The Maenads, or Bacchantes, as they were also called, were women frenzied with wine. They rushed through the woods and over mountains uttering sharp cries . . . swept away in fierce ecstasy. Nothing could stop them. People felt about Dionysus as about no other god. He was not only outside of them; he was within them, too. They could be transformed by him into being like him . . . ‘they could themselves become divine’.”  
Hamilton, *Mythology*, pgs. 67 and 73.

6. **TONGUES, SELF-CONTROL and SILENCE** 1 Corinthians 14:32-35

a. Women and Speaking in Tongues

Tongues were not restricted to Christianity; self-control was not a pagan virtue. Silence in religious experience was not a practice of women.

“The frenzy causes words to be let fall that are not uttered with the understanding of those who speak them; but it is declared, on the contrary, that they are sounded with a frenzied mouth, the speakers all of them being subservient and entirely controlled by the energy of a dominant intelligence.” Kroeger, *The Reformed Journal*, June 1978 (Quoted from: *The Egyptian Mysteries*, tr. Alexander Wilder, pp. 119f.)

“Within two decades it became clear that the Bacchanalia were not compatible with the Roman character. In 186 B.C. the consuls put down the Dionysiac rites . . . because they were not controlled by reason . . .” Grant, *God’s and the One God*, pg. 40.

“We hear much about prophetic women, ‘pythonesses’ as they were popularly known, but it is not true that oracular ‘possession’ was a distinctively female gift . . .” Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, pg. 208.

b. Self-Control

Christians were still accused of Bacchic behavior into the third Century as they struggled to let go of religious experiences caused by an altered state of consciousness, “mania” (14:23). What the new believers thought was *divine control* was really a lack of *self-control*. Those who were prompted by the Spirit to speak were to learn the need for order and respect as the means to peace and mutual edification in the body.

**c. Silence**

Paul calls for silence in public services three times:

- 1) Praying in tongues audibly without an interpreter present (pray in tongues silently, 28)
- 2) Interruption of a prophecy (the one prophesying should stop, 30)
- 3) Women asking questions at inappropriate times (wait until later, 34)

***What kinds of questions might they have been asking?***

*Q1: Why can't I keep praying in tongues out loud?*

A: 1 CORINTHIANS 14:9

*Q2: Why is it necessary for tongues to be interpreted?*

A: 14:16-17

*Q3: Why are prophecies interrupted if they are so important?*

A: 14:37-38

*Q4: Why can't I say what I want right now, why must I wait?*

A: 14:31-32

*Q5: I'm speaking for God, what does it matter what other people think?*

A: 14:23; 2 CORINTHIANS 5:20

***Conclusion***

I believe it is Paul's intent to control *disruption*, not the *appropriate* use of prophecy, tongues and interpretation. These disruptions were caused by the influence of former pagan practices still active among the Corinthian believers.