

Aspects of Culture at Corinth

Wisdom and Leadership

In Greek society, there was a line of thought that the wise men should be the leaders. Perhaps the best example of this comes from Plato's *Republic*, where he has Socrates say, "either philosophers become kings in our states or those whom we now call our kings and rulers take to the pursuit of philosophy seriously and adequately, and there is a conjunction of these two things, political power and philosophic intelligence . . ." (V.473d). These wise ones Plato likens to gold: "yet God in fashioning those of you who are fitted to hold rule mingled gold in their generation, for which reason they are the most precious" (*Republic* III.415a). It was a viewpoint such as this that Paul was combating when he argued that the Corinthians should not call themselves after Christian workers, for to do so was to rely on what the world called wisdom, but was not (cf. I Cor. 3:18-22).

Fornication and Incest

Sexual license was the rule rather than the exception in much of the ancient Mediterranean world. Hauck and Schulz write concerning Greek sexual ethics, "The main cause of prostitution is the Greek view of life which regards sexual intercourse as just as natural, necessary and justifiable as eating and drinking" (Kittel 1968, 6:582). Athenaeus devoted Book XIII of the *Deipnosophists* to extramarital sex among the Greeks. He indicates that prostitution was an established and respected function in Corinth. Athenaeus relates that whenever the city of Corinth would pray to Aphrodite in matters of grave importance, the people would "invite as many prostitutes as possible to join in their petitions, and these women [would] add their supplications to the goddess and later [be] present at the sacrifices" (*Deipnosophists* 13.573c). Further, it was the custom for the city to celebrate a festival of Aphrodite for the prostitutes (13.574b-c). The lyricist Pindar wrote in their honor:

Young girls, who welcome many strangers with your hospitality, ministrants of Persuasion in rich Corinth—who on the altar send up in smoke the auburn tears of fresh frankincense the many times that ye fly in thought up to the Mother of the Loves, heavenly Aphrodite, upon you, my children, free from reproach, she hath bestowed the right to cull the soft beauty in your desired embraces. When Necessity requires it, all things are fair. (Athenaeus *Deipnosophists* 13.574a)

This latter indicates that the Greeks saw nothing wrong with cultic prostitution, and although some complained of the influence of ordinary prostitutes, most saw nothing wrong with this either. Athenaeus relates that the Corinthian courtesan Lais replied to a detractor who had criticized her profession, "What is foul, if it seems not so to those who indulge in it?" (*Deipnosophists* 13.582d).

But the problems of sexual license were not just limited to prostitution. The Roman sage and cynic Seneca wrote, "Is there any shame at all for adultery now that matters have come to such a pass that no woman has any use for a husband except to inflame her paramour? Chastity is simply a proof of ugliness" (*On Benefits* 3.16.3). However, as Paul says in I Corinthians 5:1, even the pagans were aghast at incest. Gaius notes in his *Institutes* (1.63): "Again, I may not

marry a woman who was previously my mother-in-law or daughter-in-law or step-daughter or step-mother." And Cicero writes about a woman who had broken up her daughter's marriage to marry her son-in-law: "Oh! to think of the woman's sin, unbelievable, unheard of in all experience save for this single instance!" (*In Defense of Cluentius* VI [§15]). He goes on to speak of this incident as a "scandal among men" and a "disgrace" (*In Defense of Cluentius* VI [§15-16]). So when the Corinthians tolerated incest, they had gone even beyond the bounds of pagan propriety. But fornication and prostitution were often accepted in ancient Greek culture, and Paul's denunciation of them in I Corinthians 6 went against the grain of Greek mores.

Marriage and Divorce

Divorce was as much a problem in the ancient world as it is today. There was a long standing tradition of divorce in the Greek world. Diodorus of Sicily reports that Charondas, a sixth or seventh century B.C. leader of a Greek colony in Italy, had established a law "which gave a wife the right to divorce her husband and marry whomever she chose" (12.18.1). Closer to New Testament times, Seneca states, "Is there any woman that blushes at divorce now that certain illustrious and noble ladies reckon their years, not by the number of consuls, but by the number of their husbands, and leave home in order to marry, and marry in order to be divorced?" (*On Benefits* 3.16.2). Consequently, when Paul quoted from Jesus that the wife should not leave her husband nor the husband divorce his wife (I Cor. 7:10-11), he was teaching something novel to Greek society.

Eating Meat Offered to Idols

It was common in worshiping certain Greek gods for the devotee to share the sacrifice with the god and invite his or her friends to eat the worshiper's portion at a banquet, often in the temple of the god. The orator Aristides relates a dream that he had in which the god Asclepius commanded, "After this to go to the Temple and make a full sacrifice to Asclepius, and to have sacred bowls set up, and to distribute the sacred portions of the sacrifice to all my fellow pilgrims" (*Sacred Tales* 2.27). There was a temple of Asclepius near the gymnasium in Corinth (Pausanias *Description of Greece*, Corinth 4.5). In addition, on the road to the Acrocorinthus were temples to Isis and Sarapis (Pausanias *Description of Greece*, Corinth 4.6), who also were worshiped with meals in their temples. Fee (1987, 361) notes that there survive today at least thirteen papyrus invitations to cult meals. Willis (1985, 40-42) gives the Greek text and translations of nine of them. I have redone several of the following translations to make them consistent with one another (the original translations in Willis 1985 were done by Grenfell and Hunt 1916 [for (4), (5), (6), (7), and (10)], Willis 1985 [for (8) and (9)], Eitrem and Amundsen 1936 [for (11)], and Oates, Samuel and Welles 1967 [for (12)]). Six of them invite the recipient to the temple of a god: Sarapis, Thooris, or Isis. They read as follows:

(4) Chaeremon asks you to dine at a table of the lord Sarapis in the Sarapian [temple] tomorrow, which is the 15th, from the 9th hour (P. Oxy. 110).

(5) Apollonius asks you to dine at a table of the lord Sarapis on the occasion of the coming of age of his brothers in the Thoorian [temple] (P. Oxy. 1484).

(6) Apion asks you to dine in the house of Sarapis at a table of the lord Sarapis on the 13th from the 9th hour (P. Oxy. 1755).

(7) Diogenes asks you to dine at the first birthday of his daughter in the Sarapian [temple] tomorrow, which is well-spread [pacwn, a variant (?) of pacewn 'thick'; cf. Liddell-Scott 1968, 1351], from the 9th hour (P. Oxy. 2791).

(8) The god invites you to a table in the Thoerian [temple] tomorrow from the 9th hour (P. Colon 2555).

(9) Sarapis asks you to dine at the sacred offering for the lady Isis in her [or, his] house tomorrow, which is the 29th, from the 9th hour (P. Fouad 76).

This last meal may be taken as either at Isis's temple or at Sarapis's house, depending upon how one understands the significance of the definite article preceding the word 'house'. But three of the invitations which Willis lists are definitely to meals at the host's house. They read as follows:

(10) Antonius, [son] of Ptolemaeus, asks you to dine with him at a table of the lord Sarapis in the [house] of Claudius Sarapion on the 16th from the 9th hour (P. Oxy. 523).

(11) Sarapion, former gymnasiarch, asks you to dine at a table of the lord Sarapis in his own house tomorrow, which is the 15th, from the 8th hour (P. Oslo. 157).

(12) Dionysios asks you to dine on the 21st at a table of Helios, great Sarapis from the 9th hour at his father's house (P. Yale 85).

These invitations illustrate two situations reflected in the book of I Corinthians: a meal in an idol's temple (8:10) and a meal in honor of a god at a person's home (10:28). Therefore, the situations which Paul was addressing in I Corinthians were ones with which the Corinthians were familiar. They may well have wanted to continue a basic part of social life that they had engaged in before their conversion.

Head Coverings

One of the more controversial issues in current scholarship is the question of women's headgear in ancient Greece. Leon Morris has written, "For a woman to appear in public bareheaded was to act in what we would call a 'barefaced' manner. It was the mark of a woman of loose morals. It outraged the proprieties" (1958, 151). No less an authority as F. F. Bruce has written:

in the cultural milieu with which Paul was most familiar (both Jewish and Tarsian) it was not normally reckoned **proper** or seemly for a woman to flout these standards and appear in public **with her head uncovered**, still less to **pray to God** in public thus; this is something which he invites his readers to **judge for** themselves. (1971, 107)

But Conzelmann writes, "the Greek practice in regard to headgear and hairstyle cannot be unequivocally stated for the simple reason that the fashion varies" (1975, 185). And Oepke, in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, surveys the evidence and says:

To be sure, the veil was not unknown in Greece. It was worn partly as adornment and partly on such special occasions as match-making and marriage . . . , mourning . . . , and the worship of chthonic [i.e., underworld] deities (in the form of a garment drawn over the head). But it is quite wrong that Greek women were under some kind of compulsion to wear a veil in public. (Kittel 1965, 3:562)

He goes on to say that the idea that women always wore some sort of head covering in public is taken from two passages in Plutarch. At the end of the first century A.D. in *Moralia*, The Roman Questions 14, Plutarch asks:

Why do sons cover their heads when they escort their parents to the grave, while daughters go with uncovered heads and hair unbound? Or is it that the unusual is proper in mourning, and it is more usual for women to go forth in public with their heads covered and men with their heads uncovered?

As Oepke (Kittel 1965, 3:562) points out, this passage refers to a Roman custom, not to a Greek one. To be sure, there were Romans in the city of Corinth, for it was a Roman colony. But it was basically a Greek city, following Greek customs (cf. Dio Chrysostom *Orationes* 37.26: "he has become thoroughly hellenized, even as your own city has"). And even the Roman custom changed over time, for Plutarch goes on to say, "But formerly women were not allowed to cover the head at all. . . . the second [man to divorce his wife—rbt] was Sulpicius Gallus, because he saw his wife pull her cloak over her head . . ." (*Moralia*, The Roman Questions 14).

Now it should be noted that among the Romans, even the men covered their heads at worship. In *Moralia*, The Roman Questions 10, Plutarch asks, "Why is it that when they worship the gods, they cover their heads, but when they meet any of their fellow-men worthy of honour, if they happen to have the toga over the head, they uncover?" The only exceptions to this covering at worship that he lists are in the worship of Saturn and the god called "Honor" (*Moralia*, The Roman Questions 11, 13). And Virgil presents Aeneas as saying, "before the altar veiled our heads in Phrygian robe" (*Aeneid* 3.545).

The second passage which Oepke notes is Plutarch's *Moralia*, Sayings of Spartans, where he records regarding Charillus, an early king of Sparta, "When someone inquired why they took their girls into public places unveiled, but their married women veiled, he said, 'Because the girls have to find husbands, and the married women have to keep to those who have them!'" (Charillus 2). Although Sparta was a region in Greece, Corinth was not in Sparta, and thus it is difficult to know to what extent (if at all) this custom was practiced in Corinth.

Oepke goes on to give some of the evidence that pagan Greek women did not wear a covering on their head while worshiping. He says:

The mysteries inscription of Andania (Ditt. Syll.³, 736), which gives an exact description of women taking part in the procession, makes no mention of the veil. Indeed, the cultic order of Lycosura seems to forbid it [but this may apply to men; the verb in question seems to refer to women, but has a masculine ending—rbt]. Empresses and goddesses . . . are portrayed without veils (Kittel 1965, 3:562)

Other evidence can come from Greek pottery and art. The following data is taken from an analysis of photographs and illustrations in Verena Zinserling's *Women in Greece and Rome* (1973). In that book, 96 pictures show 180 Greek women as depicted in art ranging from the fifteenth to the first century B.C. In addition, 41 pictures show 63 Roman women from art objects ranging in date from the eighth century B.C. to the sixth century A.D. Since Zinserling's purpose was to study ancient women and she does not focus on their headdress, this analysis assumes that she did not have a bias in choosing her illustrations and they reflect a cross-section of surviving Greek and Roman art objects as they depict women. Tables 2 and 3 summarize the status of the headdress of the women shown in Zinserling's book. Where the counts for women who are bareheaded, wearing headbands, and hooded do not add up to the total, the difference is accounted for by art objects with missing heads. An examination of the data in the tables reveals that there was no uniform practice in either Greek or Roman customs.

TABLE 2

THE HEADDRESS OF GREEK WOMEN IN ILLUSTRATIONS

Date	Total	Bareheaded	Headband	Hooded	
8th BC+	12	2	5	3	
7th BC	4	4	-	-	
6th BC	29	-	20	8	
5th BC	97	21	50	23	
4th BC	20	8	4	8	
3rd BC	11	6	3	2	
2nd BC	5	2	2	-	
1st BC	2	-	-	2	
Totals	180	43	84	46	

Further analysis of the data from the illustrations in Zinserling's book provides some interesting observations. It is sometimes maintained that for a Greek woman to appear in public bareheaded was a sign that she was a prostitute (cf. Morris 1958, 151). Zinserling's work contains nine illustrations of Greek hetaerae (i.e., 'companions') taken mostly from Greek pottery; these show thirteen women and date from the sixth to the fourth century B.C. Of these one is bareheaded, six are wearing headbands and six are wearing a special type of headdress shaped something like a horn-of-plenty. The one who is bareheaded has nothing else on either. In fact, of the six hetaerae wearing the horn-shaped headdress, that is all that four of them have on except for sandals. It would seem that rather than the lack of a headdress marking prostitutes, it was the presence of a special "horn-shaped" headdress that helped identify them.

TABLE 3

THE HEADDRESS OF ROMAN WOMEN IN ILLUSTRATIONS

Date	Total	Bareheaded	Headband	Hooded
8th BC+	7	5	-	2
7th BC	-	-	-	-
6th BC	-	-	-	-
5th BC	1	-	-	1
4th BC	-	-	-	-
3rd BC	-	-	-	-
2nd BC	1	1	-	1
1st BC	16	7	3	6
1st AD	9	6	2	1
2nd AD	15	10	2	3
3rd AD	3	2	-	1
4th AD	3	3	-	-
5th AD	-	-	-	-
6th AD	8	3	1	4
Totals	63	37	8	18

Still further, Zinserling's book contains eight pictures that show fifteen Greek women in various acts of worship. A picture dating from the fifteenth century B shows three Cretean women worshipping at a tree, one bareheaded, one with a headband, and one with head covered. A seventh century B.C. water jar shows four bareheaded dancers dancing with young men in a cult dance (1973, 19). A fifth century B.C. jar shows a Maenad (i.e., a frenzied female dancer) worshipping Dionysus in a frenzy, wearing an ivy chaplet in her hair (1973, plate 21). Likewise, another fifth century B.C. jar shows four Maenads with garlands in their hair drinking at a cult celebration of Dionysus (1973, plate 51). A fifth century B.C. statue of what appears to be a girl praying with arms outstretched shows her bareheaded (1973, plate 28). A fifth century B.C. vase shows a bareheaded woman sacrificing a young pig to the goddesses of the underworld (1973, plate 43). Another fifth century B.C. vase shows a young woman and a slave girl at a scene of the cult of the dead; one is bareheaded and the other wears a headband (1973, plate 49). A third century B.C. statue of a serving maid sacrificing at a cult ritual shows her bareheaded (1973, plate 66). Finally, another third century B.C. statue shows a priestess standing apparently wearing a hood; part of her head is missing and the identification of the headwear cannot be exact (1973, plate 71). But of all the worshipers, only this last one wears a headcovering, and she has an official function as a priestess. To be sure, the examples above predate the first century A.D. by three hundred years or more. But if the customs were at all stable, the evidence above indicates that ordinary Greek women did not wear headcoverings during acts of worship.

Now Fee (1987, 509) presents evidence that women wore head coverings in religious ceremonies in two ways. First he refers to two plates in Volume XI of Goodenough's *Jewish Symbols* that show three women in the worship of Isis, two uncovered and one covered (1964, figures 99 and 101). But a two to one ratio is hardly counter-evidence to the point made above. Second, he refers to Lucius Apuleius in *The Golden Ass* where with regard to a procession at the Isis festival

we read, "The women had their hair anointed, and their heads covered with light linen; but the men had their crowns shaven and shining bright" (11.10). But these are not just any devotees; these are the initiates. Previously Apuleius had mentioned that women in the procession wore "garlands and flowers upon their heads" (11.9). Fee (1987, 509) also refers to the ambiguous evidence from Pompeii, but the Italian customs cannot have much bearing on the Greek situation.

It is also worthy of note that Greek women seem to have cut off their hair in times of mourning. Plutarch, in the context of discussing mourning at funerals, says, "So in Greece, whenever any misfortune comes, the women cut off their hair and the men let it grow . . ." (*Moralia*, The Roman Questions 14). This would be similar to the Jewish custom of shaving the head as a symbol of grief or mourning (cf. Deut. 21:12-13; Is. 7:20; 15:2; 22:12; Jer. 16:6; Mic. 1:16; and Josephus *Antiquities* iv.8.23 [§257]).

Again, note that the customs as regards women's headdress were not uniform, but varied from culture to culture. Jewish women, as well as most women in Tarsus and to the east of there, did wear a head covering in distinction to the Greek custom, a fact worth mentioning since there was a Jewish community in Corinth (cf. Acts 18:4-5). It would seem that most oriental women covered their heads in public, in the east if not in Corinth. Philo (*De Specialibus Legibus* 3.56), a first century Alexandrian Jew, describes the head-covering (*epikranon*) as "the symbol of modesty, regularly worn by women who are wholly innocent"; and it is related that a certain woman named Qimchith, who was the high priest's mother, was always veiled, even in the house (Oepke in Kittel 1965, 3:562, citing Strack and Billerbeck 1922ff., 2:430). John Lightfoot quotes several sources to show that Jewish women were veiled in the streets, but then says, "when they resorted unto holy service they took off their veils, and exposed their naked faces; and that not out of lightness, but out of religion" (reprint 1979, 4:231). "Evidence of the veil in Tarsus is provided by Dio Chrys[ostom] *Or[at]iones*, 33, 46 [sic; the reference should read 33.48-49 as below] and coins bearing the image of Tyche of Tarsus" (Oepke in Kittel 1965, 3:562). Regarding the veiling of women in Tarsus, Dio Chrysostom (33.49) indicates that Tarsian women followed an older custom of covering their faces when they went out for a walk. In discussing the customs that showed sobriety of the earlier days, he says:

Among these is the convention regarding feminine attire, a convention which prescribes that women should be so arrayed and should so deport themselves when in the street that nobody could see any part of them, neither of the face nor of the rest of the body, and that they themselves might not see anything off the road. (33.48)

William M. Ramsey (1960, 202) notes that this heavy veiling of women was "utterly different" from the Greek custom.

Oepke further notes:

etiquette as regards the veil becomes stricter the more one moves east. This rule is brought out clearly by the provisions of an old Assyrian code. Married women and widows must be veiled when in public places. On the other hand, the head of the harlot, here equated with the slave,

must remain unveiled under threat of severe penalties. When a man wishes to make one of these his legitimate wife, a special act of veiling is demanded. (Kittel 1965, 3:562-563)

All this applies to the city dwellers in the east, since the desert nomads seem not to have veiled their women (Hurley 1973, 194, citing Burckhardt 1830, 233-234).

The significance of this difference of customs regarding women's headdress in the ancient world is that it shows that there was no uniform practice, especially in Greece where women often appear without a head covering in religious rites. The evidence seems to indicate that in the first century among the Romans, both men and women covered their heads at worship, while among the Greeks, both men and women uncovered their heads when they worshipped. Thus the tradition which Paul advocated in I Corinthians 11 was, contrary to popular opinion today, not grounded in the social customs of Corinth, but opposed to them.

Lord's Supper

Drunkenness in the ancient world was sometimes considered a part of a religious rite, especially in the worship of Dionysus, who was considered the discoverer of wine (cf. Diodorus of Sicily, IV.3.4-5). It was the custom at a meal to greet undiluted wine with the words "To the good Deity [daimonoV]" and wine mixed with water with the words "To Zeus Saviour" (Diodorus of Sicily, IV.3.4). Diodorus mentions a second Dionysus, also called Sabazius, who was worshiped in secret, shameful night meetings (IV.4.1). This worship involved, among other things, the consumption of wine, as shown by a passage at the beginning of Aristophanes's play *Wasps*. The play opens with a dialogue between two household slaves on watch at night. One of them attributes his sleepiness to having drunk wine with the words: "Nay, 'tis a sleep from great Sabazius holds me" (line 9). To be sure, drunkenness at religious ceremonies was not entirely condoned. In a fragment preserved from Menander's play *The Peevish Man* [DuskoloV], we find the condemnation: "Look at their mode of offering sacrifices, the burglars that they are. They bring couches and wine-jars, not for the god's sake but their own" (129K.1-3). But with this background connection between drunkenness and religion, one should not be entirely surprised to find the Corinthians getting drunk at the Lord's Supper.

Ecstasy in Religion

There was an element in Greek religion, often identified with the worship of Dionysus, that emphasized ecstasy and frenzy. For example, in describing the worship of Osiris, Plutarch describes it as being much like the worship of Dionysus:

If, however, for the benefit of others it is needful to adduce proofs of this identity [that Osiris is identical with Dionysus], let us leave undisturbed what may not be told, but the public ceremonies which the priests perform in the burial of the Apis, when they convey his body on an improvised bier, do not in any way come short of a Bacchic procession; for they fasten skins of fawns about themselves, and carry Bacchic wands and indulge in shoutings and movements exactly as do those who are under the spell of the Dionysiae ecstasies. (*Moralia*, Isis and Osiris 364e [§35]) Note says cf. Diodorus, i.11.

But ecstasy was not limited to Dionysian worship. Even the more restrained worship of Apollo could be marked by ecstasy. Plutarch notes that in the past the oracles at Delphi used "strange words" [γλωτταί, i.e., Attic for 'tongues'] (Plutarch *Moralia*, Oracles at Delphi 406f [§24]). And in commenting on Greek religion in the middle of the second century A.D., Tatian says, "Some woman by drinking water gets into a frenzy, and loses her senses by the fumes of frankincense, and you say that she has the gift of prophecy" (Address of Tatian to the Greeks, XIX).

In fact, to Romans, the Greek religion seemed to be marked by a lack of reverence. Dionysius of Halicarnassus writes of religious rites at Rome in contrast with those of Greece:

And no festival is observed among them as a day of mourning or by the wearing of black garments and the beating of breasts and the lamentations of women because of the disappearance of deities, such as the Greeks perform in commemorating the rape of Persephone and the adventures of Dionysus and all the other things of like nature. And one will see among them, even though their manners are now corrupted, no ecstatic transports, no Corybantic frenzies, no begging under the colour of religion, no bacchanals or secret mysteries, no all-night vigils of men and women together in the temples, nor any other mummerly of this kind; but alike in all their words and actions with respect to the gods a reverence is shown such as is seen among neither Greeks nor barbarians. (*The Roman Antiquities* 2.19.2)

Once again, with this in mind, the modern reader of I Corinthians should not be surprised to find the Christians at Corinth placing a high value on those spiritual gifts which seemed to be the most ecstatic.

Women in Religion

Women often served as priestesses and prophetesses in Greek religion. The most famous oracle in all Greece was the one at Delphi, the "earth's navel" (Euripides *Ion* line 6). But the prophet there was a woman, a prophetess (cf. Euripides *Ion* lines 42, 91, 321). In describing that oracle, Plutarch (*Moralia*, The Oracles at Delphi 405c-d [§23]) tells that a maiden became a prophetic priestess. At times there was more than one prophetess there, but Plutarch (*Moralia*, Obsolescence of Oracles 414b [§8]) states that there was only one priestess at Delphi in his time. With this in mind, the reader can understand why in a section on prophecy and speaking in tongues, Paul found it necessary to discuss the principle which the churches followed about women keeping silent in the assembly. It would run against a Greek's upbringing to suggest that there was a time and place when a prophetess should not speak.

The Resurrection

Greek thought generally denied a resurrection of the body from the dead. Aeschylus has Apollo say, "When the dust hath drained the blood of a man, once he is slain, there is no resurrection [ἀνάστασις]" (*Eumenides* 647-648). In Aeschylus's play *Agamemnon*, a member of the chorus says, "I know no way how by mere words to bring the dead back to life" (lines 1360-1361). Herodotus reports that Prexaspes told Cambyses, "If the dead can rise, you may look to see Astyages the Mede rise up against you; but if nature's order be not changed, assuredly no harm to you will arise from Smerdis" (III.62). And the chorus in Sophocles's *Electra* say, "Yet him, thy

sire, from Acheron's dark shore / By prayers or cries thou never can'st restore, / No, never more" (lines 137-139).

It is true that Aristotle mentions the possibility of a resurrection in *On the Soul* I.iii.406b. But this seems to be a possibility that he thinks his readers will reject and thus it is an argument against the idea that a soul which has left a body could enter it again. Rather, in that same paragraph he argues, "the soul has the same movements as the body." Later he argues against the Pythagorean view that any soul can enter into any body, for "every body has its own peculiar shape or form" (*On the Soul* I.iii.407b). To follow this to its logical conclusion, if a body has decayed, the soul would no longer be able to reenter it, for it would now have a different shape and form.

By the second century A.D., opponents of Christianity were arguing that this dissolution of the body makes a resurrection impossible. Athenagoras the Athenian wrote:

These persons, to wit, say that many bodies of those who have come to an unhappy death in shipwrecks and rivers have become food for fishes, and many of those who perish in war, or who from some other sad cause or state of things are deprived of burial, lie exposed to become the food of any animals which may chance to light upon them. (*On the Resurrection of the Dead*, III)

To be sure, this comes from a century after the writing of I Corinthians, and it can be maintained that this objection arose in response to Christianity. But the Jews had taught the resurrection hundreds of years before this, and it is likely that the argument had emerged much earlier.

With this in mind, it becomes apparent that those at Corinth who were arguing that there was no resurrection of the dead were simply following the line of thinking that they had held for years before their conversion. They were trying to make Christianity more palatable to Greeks, but at a cost that would destroy the central tenet of Christianity.

Contributions

Corinth is described as a "prosperous and wealthy" city (Dio Chrysostom *Orationes* 37.36). As such, it was a favorite stop for orators who gave speeches and collected fees. In the writings of Dio Chrysostom, one finds: "Again, Herodotus the historian also paid you a visit, bringing tales of Greece, and in particular tales of Corinth—not yet fallacious tales—in return for which he expected to receive pay from the city. But failing of obtaining even that . . ." (*Orationes* 37.7). When Paul argued that he had not availed himself of his right to be supported by the Corinthians (I Cor. 9:15-18) and again when he suggested that they should select some individuals to carry their gift to Jerusalem (I Cor. 16:3), he was trying to avoid being identified with these travelling orators.

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http://bible.ovu.edu/terry/dissertation/2_4-aspects.htm