

# Scripture Standard

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## Living Water, Breath of Life

Words of Jesus

Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of **water** and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

John 3:5-8

Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the **water** that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the **water** that I shall give him shall be in him a well of **water** springing up into everlasting **life**

John 4:13-14

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of **living water**. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

John 7:37-38

**Pleading for a  
total return to  
New Testament  
principles.**

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**contend earnestly  
for the faith  
Jude 1:3**

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## THE NATURE OF BIBLICAL CORINTH

Kim Boland

There is, sadly, some thought that Corinth was a highly immoral place to live, and for this reason, Paul's message to Corinth is not to be taken seriously today.

The thinking may be divided into two sections; firstly, a form of interpretation based on an historical understanding of the destination of the letter. Secondly, a view that separate requirements were given for a unique social situation.

With regard to the first, the interpretation is based on a misunderstanding of the situation in Corinth.

On the second, it must be shown that God's Word caters for differing situations.

The misunderstanding comes from the historian Strabo who wrote: "The Sanctuary of Aphrodite at Corinth was so rich that it had possessed more than a thousand hierodules, courtesans, whom both men and women used to dedicate to the goddess."

An article by B. Spaeth comments on the above:

This passage has often been taken as referring to "sacred prostitution" and applied to elucidate such texts as Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians. The evidence for this practice, however, is problematic, and close examination suggests that if it existed at all in Greek Corinth, which itself is highly questionable, it had died out by the mid-1st century BCE, when Corinth became a Roman colony.

Anthony Thistleton in his commentary on Corinth tells us:

In 146 B.C. a Roman army sacked the city, and they left it virtually in ruins for some two hundred years. The new Corinth was initially resettled chiefly by Roman soldiers, Roman freed persons, and Roman slaves, and was very soon swelled by tradespersons and business entrepreneurs from various parts of the Roman Republic. The government and laws of the new city

were established on a fully Roman pattern.

Loyalty to Rome was fundamental, for the settlement of the veterans and loyal Roman citizens made Corinth a secure strategic base.

The writer Gordon Fee suggests:

This (immoral) aspect of Corinthian life, however, has tended to be overlaid by most NT scholars, relying on Strabo's (surely erroneous) description of the thousand temple prostitutes who were alleged to have plied their trade at the temple of Aphrodite on the Acrocorinth. In the first place Strabo was speaking of Old Corinth, and even then it is doubtful whether his information was accurate. Sexual sin there undoubtedly was in abundance; but it would have been of the same kind that one would expect in any seaport where money flowed freely and women and men were available.

The reports of Corinth as a particularly corrupt city refer to the time before its destruction by the Romans. Its later recolonisation led to it being not worse (or better) than other such cities at that time. Paul wrote to a church with many issues. He did not seek to use worldly wisdom to speak to them:

Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe...but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles.

1 Corinthians 1:20-21, 23 ESV

There is no indication throughout this letter that Paul suggests solutions for a particular social situation.

I suggest we have no reason or justification in ignoring the letters to the Corinthians. Rather, we should follow Paul's closing exhortations:

Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let

all that you do be done in love. 1 Corinthians 16:13-14

Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? - unless indeed you fail to meet the test! I hope you will find out that we have not failed the test.

2 Corinthians 13:5-6

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## **THE TRUE CHURCH**

Kim Boland

I recently came across a book by a Catholic theologian (ex Presbyterian) John Bergma, called “Stunned by Scripture – how the Bible Made me Catholic”. I was given the book by someone who had been influenced by this book to join the Catholic religion.

What influenced Bergma to join the Roman Catholic religion? (I cannot use the word “church” as it is a religion of its own, which is not referenced in the Bible). He uses Scripture, not surprisingly, out of context to attempt to prove that Catholic doctrine is Bible based. This is dishonest. He knows, as a Catholic theologian (he has a PHD from one of their colleges), that they do not use the Bible to justify their beliefs, but use nonbiblical sources, and oral tradition.

The Catholics claim to be directly descended from the New Testament church. It is on that claim that it tries to appeal to people, setting itself up as the “true church”.

Does that claim stand up to scrutiny?

Before we look into that, let us turn to an article by a Jesuit. He had been teaching a class on the book of Genesis, and was surprised when his class could not understand that he did not accept the Biblical account of creation. His article entitled “Three ways to combat Biblical literalism” stated:

The ideas I taught were based not on my personal opinions but on the best of contemporary Catholic scholarship and on the tradition of the church...The Pontifical Biblical Commission

pointed out in 1993 that “fundamentalism actually invites people to a kind of intellectual suicide”...

I made reference to the 2004 statement by the Vatican-sponsored International Theological Commission, which spoke positively about the Big Bang theory. I also quoted Pope John Paul II’s affirming remarks on the theory of evolution.”

The above shows clearly the Roman Catholic view of Scripture.

As we see more scientists leave the theory of evolution as unproven and unlikely, it is amazing that this religion places its full trust in such statements. A pamphlet, available on the simplychristians website, called “The World is Young” summarises the evidence for creation. There are excellent books, written by scientists, who have decided that the theory of evolution cannot be supported by scientific evidence. How is it that the supposedly “inspired” pope decides in favour of a worldly view?

Another article, on a page advertising this terrible book, suggested:

Praying to the saints can be more than just finding a prayer to a saint in a prayer book. Through the church we are united to the saints in a profound way, yet most Catholics fail to make real connection with our brothers and sisters in the church  
Triumphant, missing out on a powerful aid to their spiritual life.

Clearly those of us who fail to see praying to the dead as Scriptural are suffering from intellectual suicide.

Is the oldest “church” the true church?

If we seek the oldest church we need to look no further than the New Testament. Those that left this church were not part of it, and so have no claim to being the church that Christ established.

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.

1 John 2:19 ESV

We see in this thought from John that people would leave the early church.

In the book of Acts, Paul warned the elders of the church in Ephesus that wolves would come in amongst them.

I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore, be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears.

Acts 20:29-31

Paul also warned the Colossians:

See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

Colossians 2:8

There can be no doubt that the early church was going to see corruptions of doctrine and teaching. Paul closed his first letter to Timothy by urging him:

O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called "knowledge," for by professing it some have swerved from the faith. Grace be with you

1Timothy 6:20-21

What do these verses tell us?

- (i) That those that left the church were not part of it.
- (ii) That fierce wolves would come into the church. Scripture would be twisted.
- (iii) The church will be prey to traditions and human philosophies. With these we should have nothing to do. Such knowledge is "babble" and is contradictory to the truth.

We are warned away from such things. In the early epistles we read of different human philosophies, which we should avoid.

The church in Ephesus is praised:

Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. Revelation 2:6

At the same time, the church in Pergamum is warned:

So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Revelation 2:15

Is it not striking that we saw Paul's earlier appeal to the elders at Ephesus? They clearly responded and refused to allow error to come in.

It appears this philosophy (Nicolaitans) tried to hold to some teachings of Christ, but perverted them by human reasoning, some of which may have been to permit immorality. Whatever it was, as a human philosophy, it has no place in the church.

### **Lessons from History**

Alexander Campbell, in the foreword to the Christian System (1835) stated:

Since the full development of the great apostasy foretold by Prophets and Apostles, numerous attempts at reformation have been made. Three full centuries, carrying with them the destinies of countless millions, have passed into eternity since the Lutheran effort to dethrone the Man of Sin.

JW Shepherd in "The Church, the Falling Away and the Restoration" covers these issues excellently. We can be encouraged to read or re-read this important work. He shows us that church government soon fell from the standards set by the apostles:

As we have already learned, the apostolic churches had a plurality of elders or bishops. At the first the elders of any particular congregation would select one of their number to preside at their meetings for the transaction of business, and in the course of time he came to be known as "The Bishop." Little

by little he came to feel his importance till he was exalted above his fellow elders. This the presbyters would not concede. Divisions arose out of these troubles, and the authority of the bishops, closely united among themselves, came victorious over the presbyters, who opposed them singlehanded. The power and authority of these bishops were regulated by the prominence of the cities in which they presided. As Rome was the chief city of the world at that time, the bishops of cities of less importance regarded it an honor to themselves to concede to the bishop of Rome the pre-eminence in all things; and so he extended his authority from time to time, till almost the whole world bowed to his authority.

We need only mention the other errors that crept in during those early sad 300 years after the apostles had gone:

- Infant baptism
- Prayers and worship of Mary and other “saints”
- Introduction on celibacy, at first for elders, then “priests”
- Confessionals
- Indulgences
- Transubstantiation

These and many more were challenged by the early reformers.

We have seen the current attitude of Catholicism to the Bible. Such has it always been. The reasons are clear! Once people had the Word of God in their own language, they were able to see what was truth, and what was clearly falsehood.

After Wycliffe translated the Bible from Latin into English a council of 1200 decreed:

We also forbid the laity to possess any of the books of the Old or New Testament, except, perhaps, the Psalter or Breviary for the Divine Offices, or the Hours of the Blessed Virgin, which some, out of devotion, wish to have; but having any of these books translated into the vulgar (local) tongue, we strictly forbid.

An excellent (but old) book called “The Lollards” contains a summary for the errors brought in by Rome over the first five centuries of the church.



In the book of Jude, we see specifically warnings against false teachings. These were moving away from the gospel “once for all delivered”.

## **Keep to the New Testament**

We do not need to look for new solutions. Campbell addressed a problem that was rife in the USA. The UK, which they had left behind, had, at the time of the Reformation formed puritan assemblies, called “Church of Christ” and held to the Bible.

## **What is happening today?**

After the Vatican 2 council, the Roman Catholic church has sought to embrace conversation with former reformed churches. This has led to a move towards Catholicism in these reformed churches. A Church of England bishop has recently moved to the Catholic “religion”. For this reason, I do not believe that we need or should embrace modern ecumenicalism. We have the words of Scripture to follow as Jude warns of false teachers:

Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. Jude 1:3-4

In his commentary on Jude, Clinton Hamilton (Truth Commentaries) states:

It is interesting to note that Peter predicts such false teachers will secretly slip in (2 Peter 2:1). Paul speaks of “false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage” (Galatians 2:4). Peter predicted there would be false teachers who will smuggle themselves in among the saints and seek to inculcate them with their false doctrines. Jude speaks of similar teachers as having already infiltrated themselves among the brethren with their false teachings.

We thus have clear evidence that false teaching was to come into the early church. Hamilton makes a most useful comment, which should be of use to those seeking the true church:

Any attempt to build a church based on Old Testament principles, in particular those of the Temple miss the point that the Old Testament has been replaced by a New Covenant. This is clearly shown in the book of Hebrews. Solomon's Temple led to division of the people of Israel, and was built to man's standard and not those of God. A comparison of the building of the Tabernacle and the Temple will show how God needs to direct His places of worship.

In conclusion, we must ask these questions. Whom are we seeking to please in choosing a "church", and who should we be trying to please?

There is and can be only one gospel. If we seek another one, we are pleasing ourselves:

As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed. For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Galatians 1:9-10

The source of the truth is clear:

For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

Galatians 1:11-12

In conclusion, the warning of error to the early church is as relevant today as it was then. Let us not as individuals embrace human philosophies and such "babble". As churches may our elders "therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears."

Where elders do not exist, may we work to appoint them, without whom we have no one to admonish and to be alert for the church.

## OBITUARY

John Morgan 1944-2021,  
Hindley, Wigan

John departed this life on the 11th October 2021. He leaves behind his loving wife Jeniffer, children Allison, Jonathan, Julian and Bethan and their families, including grandchildren Benjamin, Eleanor, Samuel, Caitlin and Evie; all saddened in grief but united in love and mutual support.



The theology of John was of a practical nature. He was in great demand in the church as a preacher of the gospel and a teacher of a syllabus based on the Word of God. In the community John was recognised as a man “who went about doing good”. Immediately after his death, his Facebook page was filled with accolades.

“a lovely man; a true gentleman; a true legend of Hindley; open and transparent and an all-round good guy; always encouraged people; a special man who made you feel loved and valuable.”

The same people recognised his motivation:

“he was a tireless servant of his Lord; he was everything that epitomised goodness; John always practised his beliefs; a great worker for the Lord; a hero of his faith; an earthly loss, a heavenly gain.”

A Hindley bereavement group founded by John is testimony to his heart for God’s people. One member said, “he encouraged and supported the bereaved always knowing the right word.”

He created a weekly publication, aptly named ‘The Encourager’ which was read locally, nationally, and latterly internationally.

He was a living example of “God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works.” John understood that “God had prepared

these beforehand and that we should walk in them.”

His working life also reflected his love for his community. He was a master grocer who created a shop which not only produced the best of provisions, but which became a social/community centre for the people of Hindley.

Thanks from mum and the family for all the support and prayers

Julian Morgan

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## **GHANA APPEAL**

The Church of Christ at Dennyloanhead is very grateful to all sister churches, individual brothers and sisters who contribute to the Ghana Appeal. Please send donations to:

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23 Princes Street, Bonnybridge, FK4 1BJ  
E-mail: donald.scobbie@blueyonder.co.uk

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