

In polite society it is generally considered ill mannered to bring up matters of religion or politics. Why is this? It is because such discussions generally gender strife. And why is that? It is because people have no common ground for the discussion, They aren't speaking the same language. They have nothing in common to which they can appeal so they can settle their differences. Just like at the Tower of Babel several millennia ago, common projects disintegrate into confusion and strife when men can no longer speak the same language. Almost five centuries ago the Christian church was split in two when men could no longer communicate in the same language. One side was speaking the language of scripture and the other side the language of tradition and papal authority. The result was a parting of the ways and the Great Protestant Reformation. As the scriptures themselves state it, "*Can two walk together, except they be agreed?*" (Amos 3:3).

How can we solve this dilemma so that we can have meaningful discussion of the most important things in our lives; our beliefs? What standard can we use that all men can appeal to? We can no longer appeal to the word of emperors or popes as men used to do? They too were sinful and fallible men whose statements were often contradictory. Are we really prepared to submit our conscience to their sayings? But we are all creatures of the same God who formed us in His image and to whom we owe all due allegiance and submission. It is to His word that we can all appeal. Not only is this the only possible standard, but God has providentially, in His goodness and mercy, provided just such a standard; the Holy Scriptures more commonly called the Bible.

Now that the scriptures are the very word of God is clearly evident and has been so for thousands of years. The prophet Isaiah, complaining of the Israelites of his day resorting to mediums and spiritists urged them to turn to the word of God declaring, "*To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them*" (Isaiah 8:20). And so states the Apostle Peter, "*Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*" (2 Peter 1:20-21). And so taught the Apostle Paul rejoicing that men were receiving the word of God, "*For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe*" (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

But not only are the scriptures the very word of God, inspired, infallible, and inerrant, so that they are the ultimate authority in any religious question, but they are also completely sufficient for that purpose. Paul taught so, teaching his son in the faith, Timothy, that "*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*" (2 Tim 3:16-17), and reminding him that, "... *from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus*" (2 Tim 3:15).

Christ himself, although he could simply have used His authority as the Son of God, frequently chose to use this standard to settle religious issues. When he was tempted of Satan in the wilderness, He responded to each Satanic temptation with a scriptural answer, declaring, "*It is written*" (Matthew 4:4-10). Similarly when he addressed some of His dispirited followers after His crucifixion and death, He chose not to reveal His identity at first but to convince them from the scriptures. As Luke records it, "*Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ (The Messiah or the Anointed One) to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself*" (Luke 24:25-27). In Christ's teaching ministry the scriptures were preeminent.

And Christ exhorts us to follow His example, teaching, "*It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*" (Mat 4:4). Even his enemies were exhorted to study the scriptures. In rebuking the Pharisees Christ declared, "*Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me*" (John 5:39). And in correcting the Saducees He "...*answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God*" (Mat 22:29).

And such was the practice of the Apostles and preachers of the early Christian Church. "*And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures*" (Acts 17:2). And similarly Apollos, "...*mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ (i.e. the Messiah)*" (Acts 18:28). Paul especially commended those believers who studied the scriptures to confirm the truth of his teaching. "*These were more noble*

*than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so (Acts 17:11).*

If you are tired of endless and meaningless religious discussions based on mere human opinions we invite you to join with us in the study of God's holy, infallible, and inerrant word. If you are tired of the emptiness and sterility of life where all meaningful discussion of eternal values is banished as a hopeless exercise leading only to confusion and strife we invite you to study these matters in the light of the word of God. As David stated it in the Psalms, "*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path*" (Psalm 119:105). And as Jesus himself taught, "*I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life*" (John 8:12).