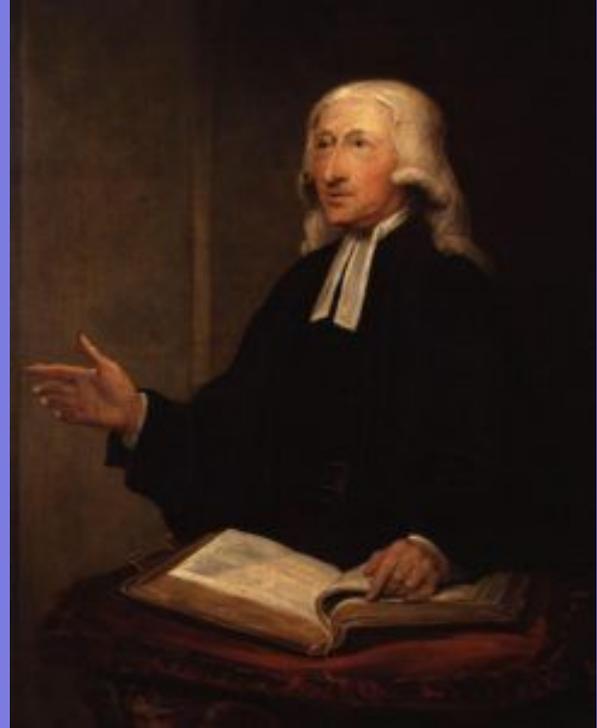


METHODISM FOR DUMMIES

Week two: How do Methodists read the BIBLE?

WHICH BOOK OF THE BIBLE HAS MEANT
THE MOST TO YOU AND WHY?

JOHN WESLEY:
A MAN OF
ONE BOOK



TO candid, reasonable men, I am not afraid to lay open what have been the inmost thoughts of my heart. I have thought, I am a creature of a day, passing through life as an arrow through the air. I am a spirit come from God, and returning to God: just hovering over the great gulf; till, a few moments hence, I am no more seen; I drop into an unchangeable eternity! I want to know one thing,—the way to heaven; how to land safe on that happy shore. God himself has condescended to teach me the way. For this very end He came from heaven.

He hath written it down in a book. O give me that book! At any price, give me the book of God! I have it: here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be homo unius libri. Here then I am, far from the busy ways of men. I sit down alone; only God is here. In His presence I open, I read His book; for this end, to find the way to heaven. Is there a doubt concerning the meaning of what I read? Does anything appear dark or intricate? I lift up my heart to the Father of Lights:—"Lord, is it not Thy word, 'if any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God?' Thou givest liberally, and upbraidest not. Thou hast said, 'if any be willing to do Thy will, he shall know.' I am willing to do, let me know Thy will." I then search after and consider parallel passages of Scripture, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual." I meditate thereon with all the attention and earnestness of which my mind is capable. If any doubt still remains, I consult those who are experienced in the things of God: and then the writings whereby, being dead, they yet speak. And what I thus learn, that I teach.

-John Wesley, *Preface to Sermons*

"THE BIBLE SAYS IT
I BELIEVE IT
THAT SETTLES IT"

...DOES IT?



HERMENEUTICS

7 Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink the milk? 8 Do I say this merely on human authority? Doesn't the Law say the same thing? 9 For it is written in the Law of Moses: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." Is it about oxen that God is concerned?

10 Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us,

because whoever plows and threshes should be able to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest.

-Apostle Paul, 1 Corinthians 9

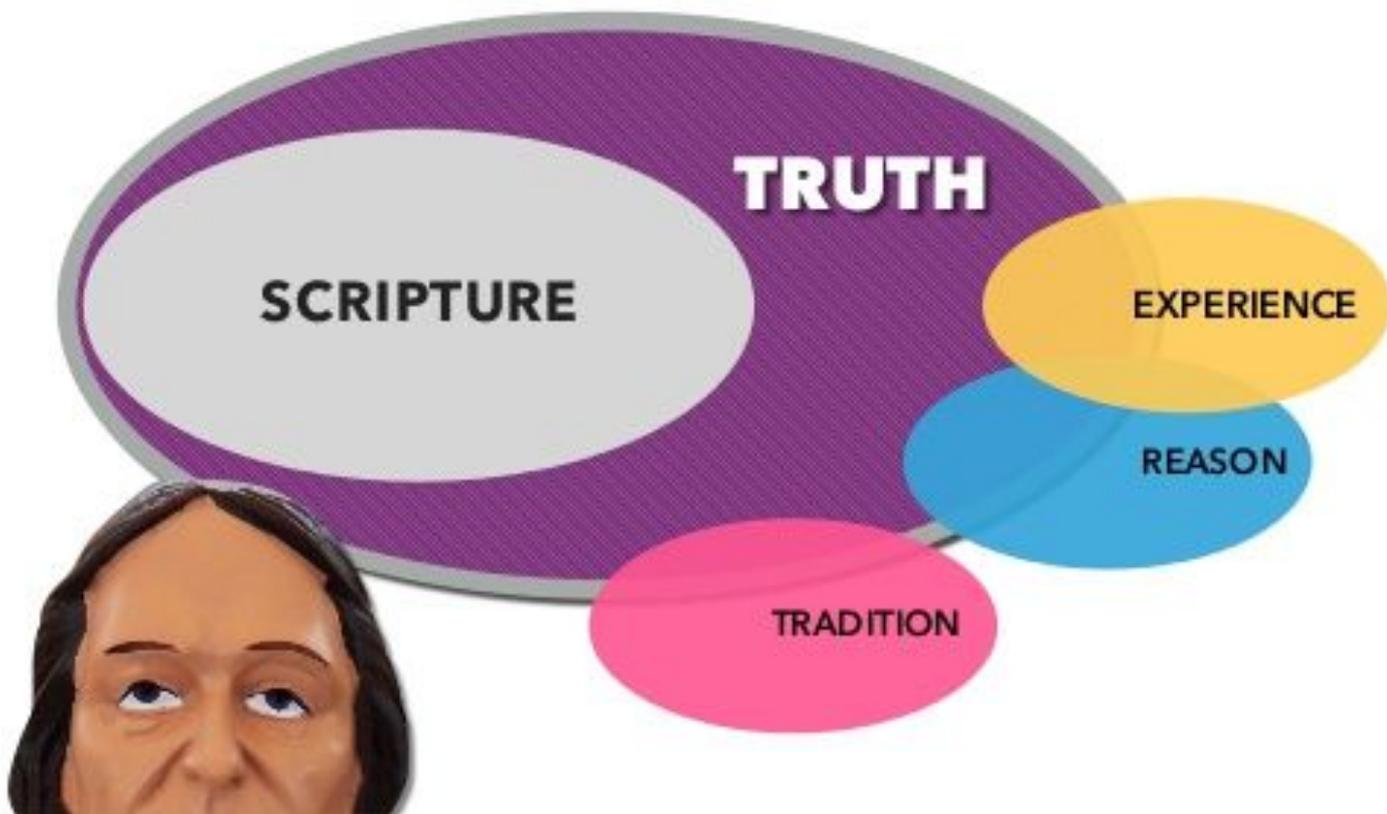
1 Corinthians 7

10 To the married I give this command **(not I, but the Lord)**: A wife must not separate from her husband. 11 But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.

12 To the rest I say this **(I, not the Lord)**: If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. 13 And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. 14 For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

A NEW LOOK AT

The Wesleyan Quadrilateral



From the Articles of Religion of the Methodist Church:

Article V — Of the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation

The Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.

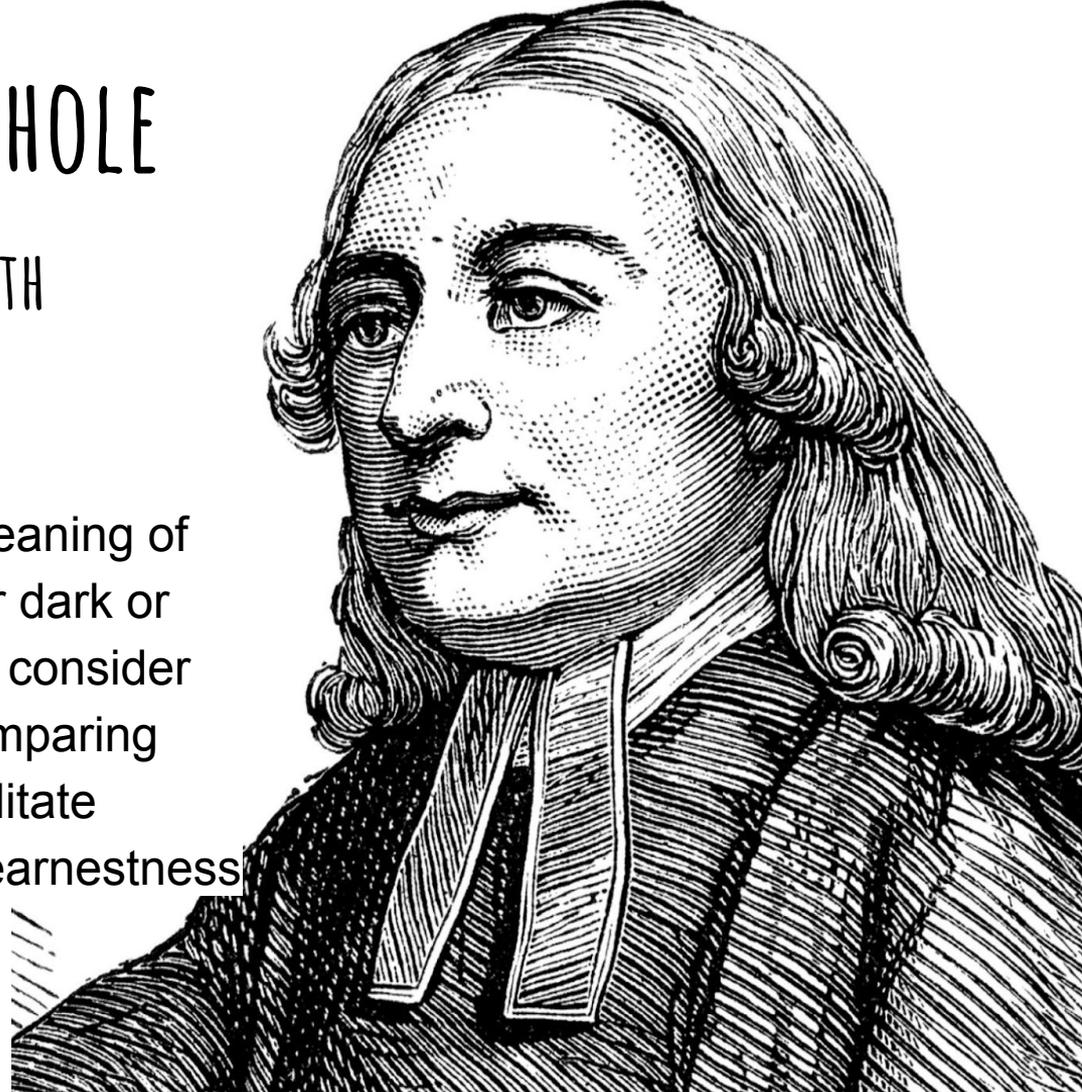
Article VI — Of the Old Testament

The Old Testament is not contrary to the New; for both in the Old and New Testament everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and man, being both God and Man. Wherefore they are not to be heard who feign that the old fathers did look only for transitory promises. Although the law given from God by Moses as touching ceremonies and rites doth not bind Christians, nor ought the civil precepts thereof of necessity be received in any commonwealth; yet notwithstanding, no Christian whatsoever is free from the obedience of the commandments which are called moral.

READ THE BIBLE AS A WHOLE

HOW DOES ONE VERSE FIT IN WITH
THE WHOLE OF SCRIPTURE?

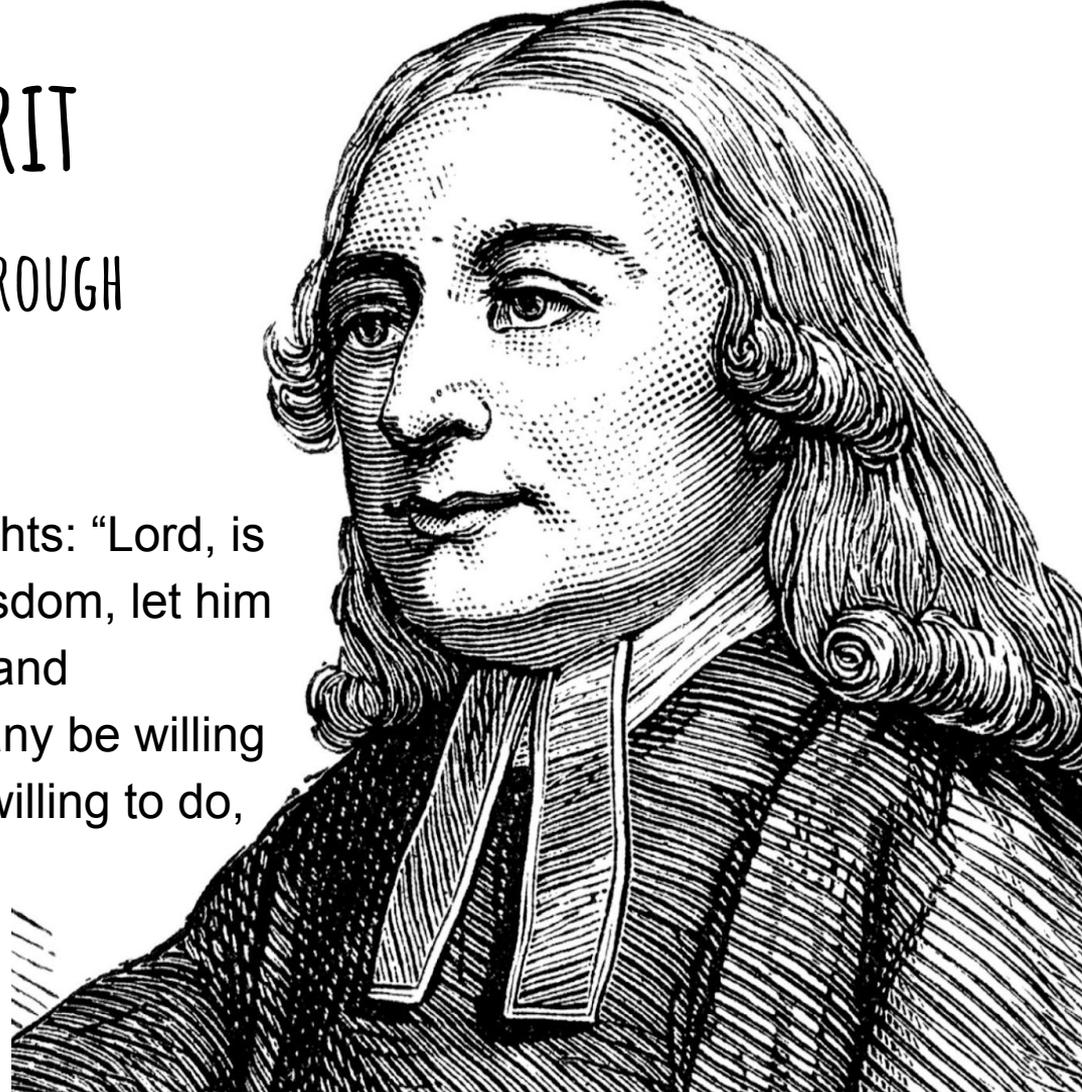
“Is there a doubt concerning the meaning of what I read? Does anything appear dark or intricate? ...I then search after and consider parallel passages of Scripture, “comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” I meditate thereon, with all the attention and earnestness of which my mind is capable.”



RELY ON THE HOLY SPIRIT

HOW IS THE SPIRIT SPEAKING THROUGH
THE TEXT?

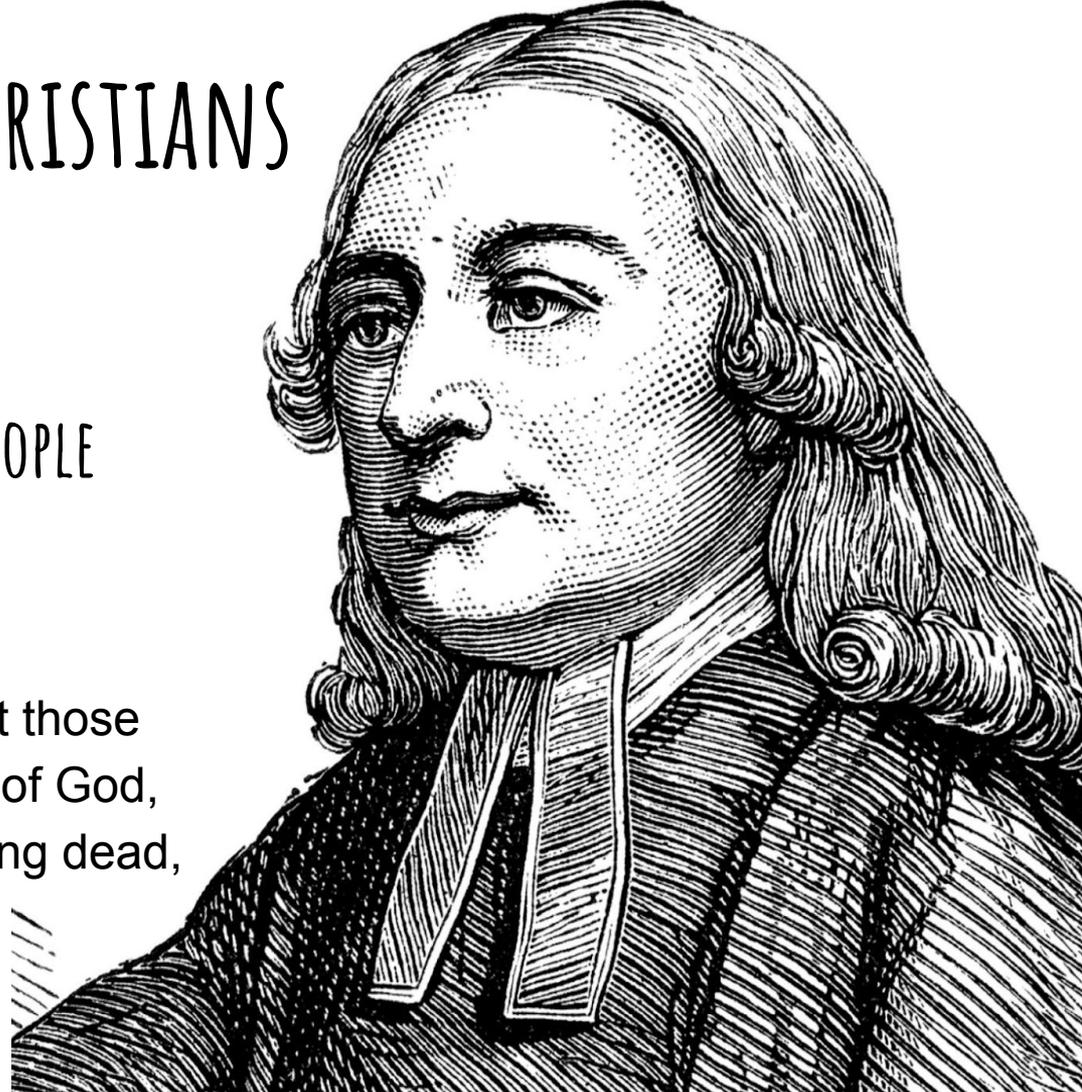
I lift up my heart to the Father of lights: “Lord, is it not thy Word, ‘If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God’? Thou ‘givest liberally and upbraidest not.’ Thou has said, ‘If any be willing to do thy will, he shall know.’ I am willing to do, let me know, thy will.”



READ WITH TRUSTED CHRISTIANS (EXPERIENCE)

WHAT DO OTHER FAITHFUL PEOPLE
THINK?

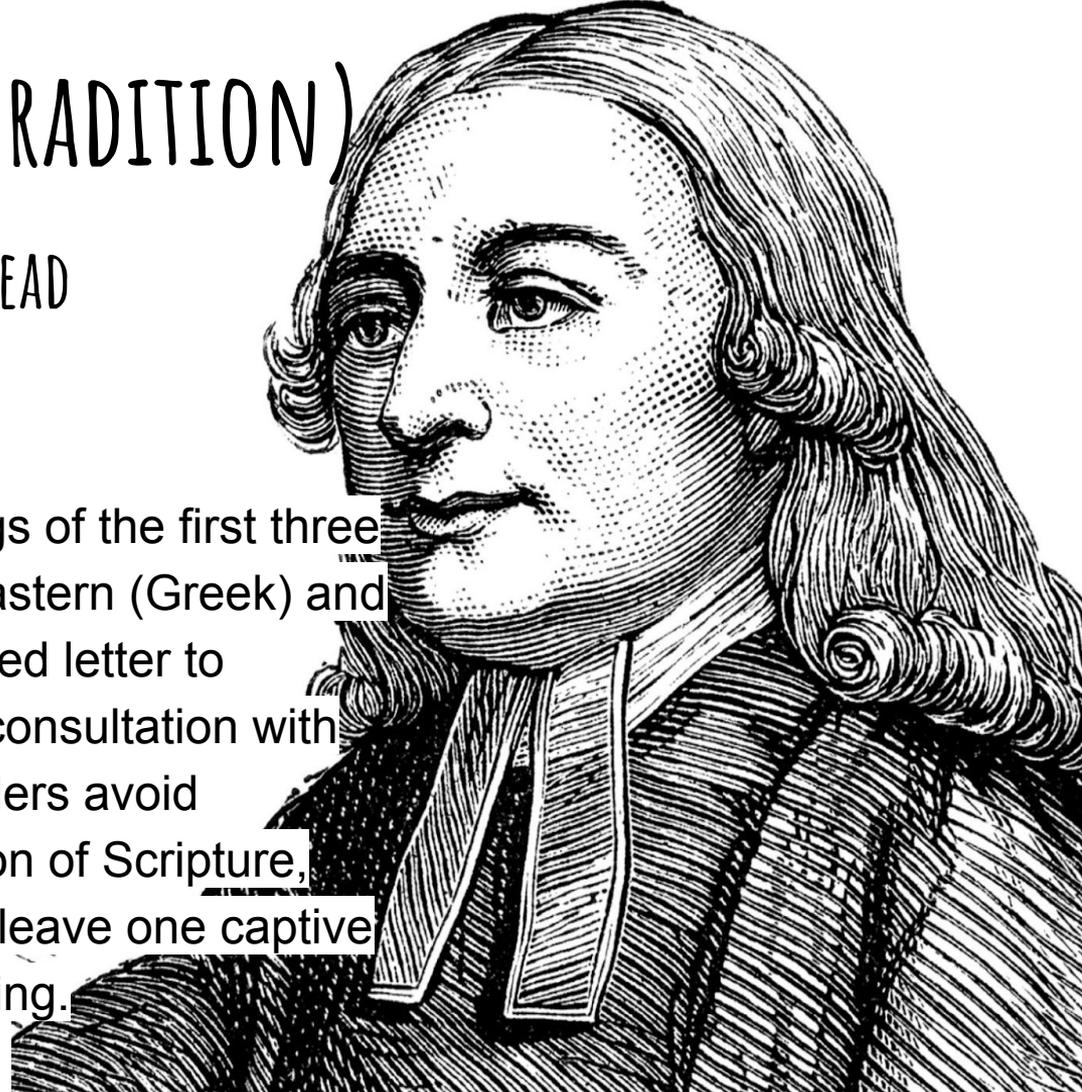
“If any doubt still remains, I consult those who are experienced in the things of God, and then the writings whereby, being dead, they yet speak.”



LISTEN TO THE DEAD! (TRADITION)

HOW DID CHRISTIANS BEFORE US READ
THE TEXT?

Wesley particularly valued the writings of the first three centuries of the church, in both its Eastern (Greek) and Western (Latin) settings. In a published letter to Conyers Middleton, he insisted that consultation with these writings had helped many readers avoid dangerous errors in their interpretation of Scripture, while neglect of these writings could leave one captive to misunderstandings currently reigning.

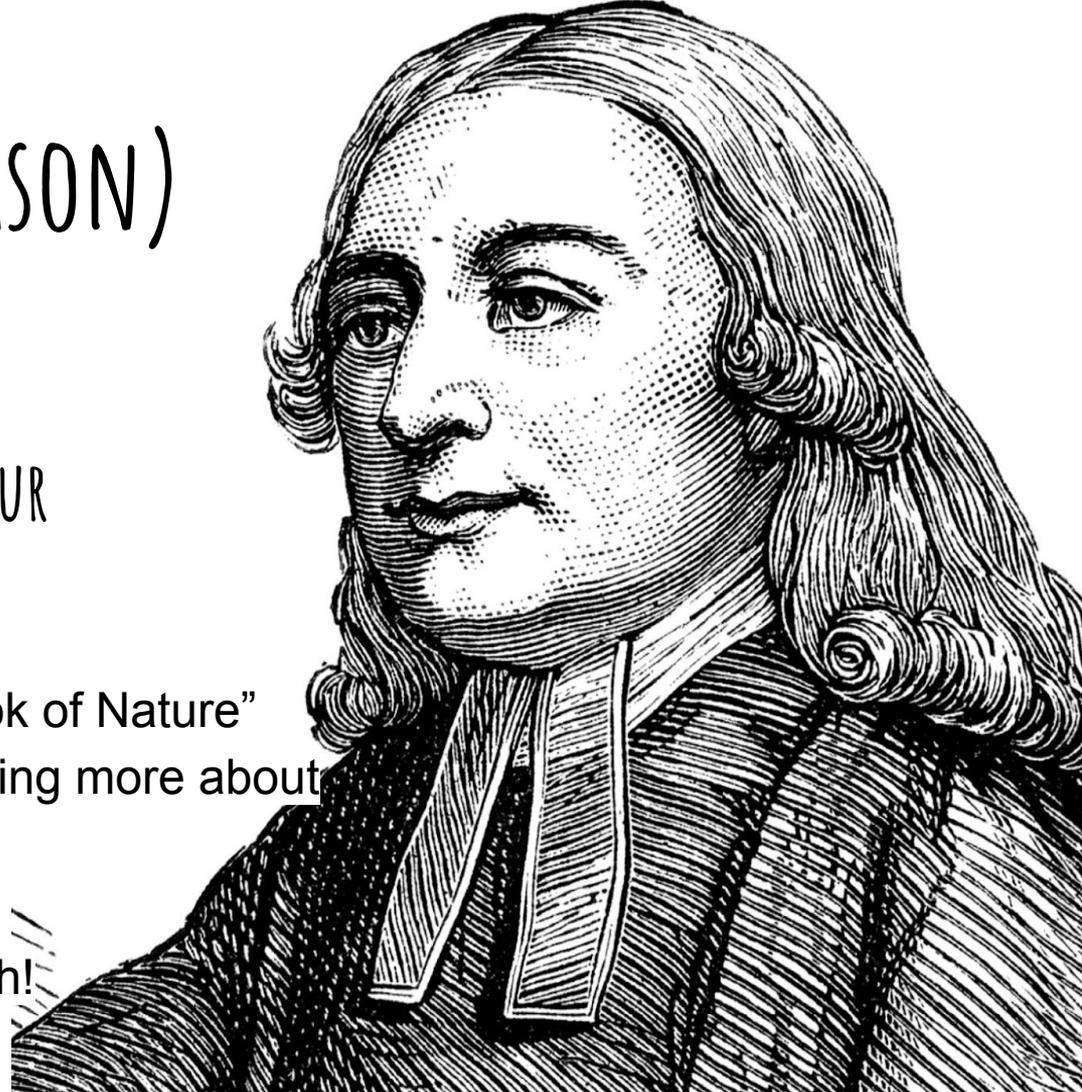


USE YOUR BRAIN! (REASON)

HOW DOES THE NATURAL WORLD,
CRITICAL THINKING, INFORM OUR
READING?

Wesley believed in studying the “Book of Nature” alongside scripture as a way of learning more about God’s created world.

Christians never have to fear the truth!



CASE STUDY: INFANT BAPTISM

Why do United Methodists
baptize infants?



WHAT'S THE BIBLE SAY?

...it's complicated.

But there is no specific instructions in scripture itself on age restrictions.

Acts 2:37-39

³⁷ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

³⁸ Peter replied, “**Repent and be baptized, every one of you**, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ **The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off**—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

Acts 16:31-34

³¹ They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—**you and your household**.” ³² Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. ³³ At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized. ³⁴ The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—**he and his whole household**.

WHAT DOES TRADITION SAY?

Fairly unanimous
support of infant
baptism from early
church fathers onward
(exceptions:
Anabaptists and
English Baptists).

Irenaeus

"He [Jesus] came to save all through himself; all, I say, who through him are reborn in God: infants, and children, and youths, and old men. Therefore he passed through every age, becoming an infant for infants, sanctifying infants; a child for children, sanctifying those who are of that age . . . [so that] he might be the perfect teacher in all things, perfect not only in respect to the setting forth of truth, perfect also in respect to relative age"
(Against Heresies 2:22:4 [A.D. 189])

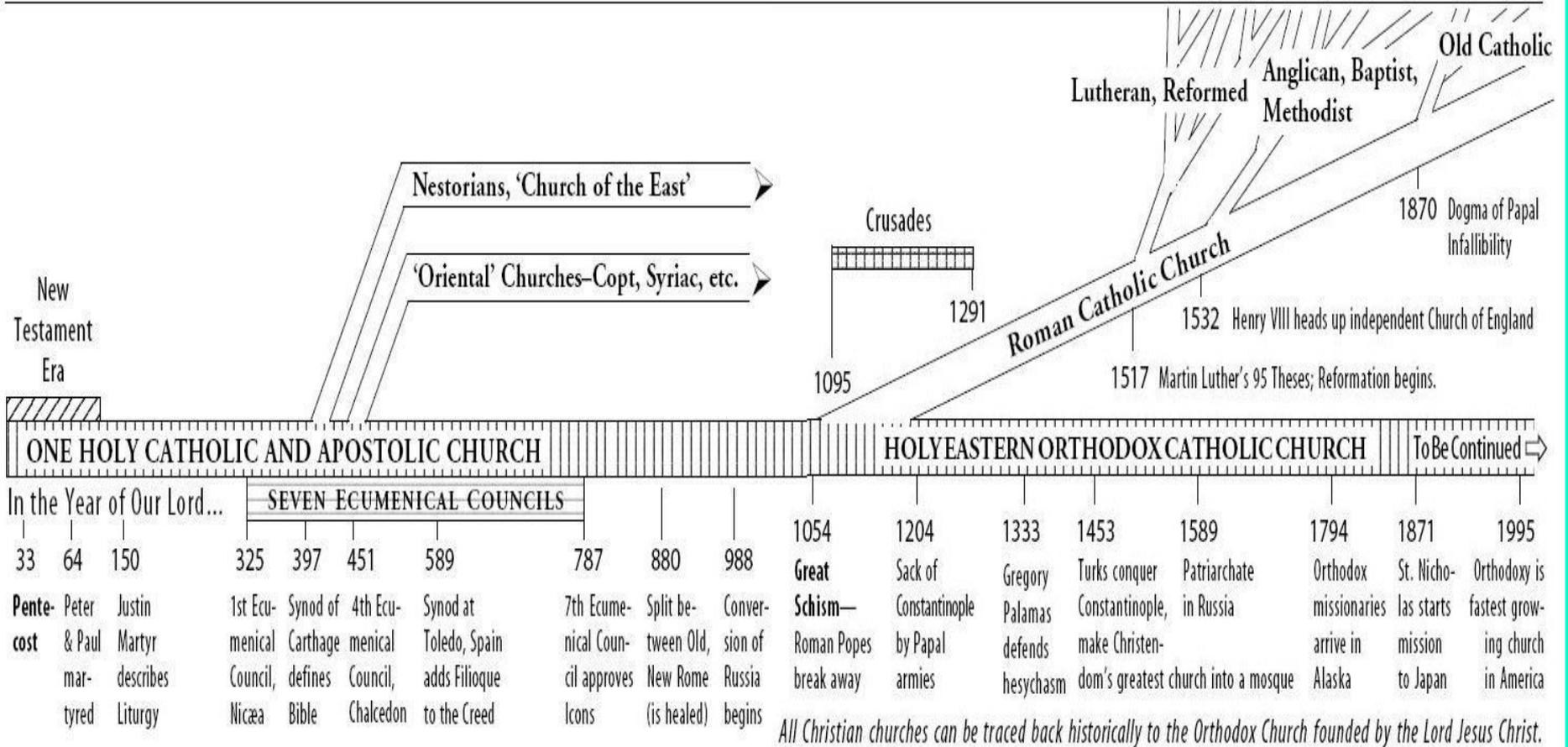
Hippolytus

"Baptize first the children, and if they can speak for themselves let them do so. Otherwise, let their parents or other relatives speak for them" (The Apostolic Tradition 21:16 [A.D. 215]).

Origen

"Every soul that is born into flesh is soiled by the filth of wickedness and sin. . . . In the Church, baptism is given for the remission of sins, and, according to the usage of the Church, baptism is given even to infants. If there were nothing in infants which required the remission of sins and nothing in them pertinent to forgiveness, the grace of baptism would seem superfluous"
(Homilies on Leviticus 8:3 [A.D. 248]).

TIMELINE OF CHURCH HISTORY



All Christian churches can be traced back historically to the Orthodox Church founded by the Lord Jesus Christ.

WHAT DOES REASON SAY?

Is baptism effective
based on our
understanding of it?

OR

Is it a gift of grace
from God?

Reason:

**-we synthesize the different texts
of scripture**

**-we think theologically, about
how Baptism fits in to the basic
gospel message of Jesus
(baptism \Leftrightarrow circumcision)**

**-we puzzle through the great
theologians, and learn from their
reasoning**

WHAT DOES EXPERIENCE SAY?

How has infant baptism been a gift to the church?

How do we learn from other trusted Christians?

Experience:

-how do we read these various texts from scripture about baptism?

-how has infant baptism been a gift to the church?

-is faith based on our understanding of grace or our response to God's grace?

SO...WHAT DO WE THINK OF BAPTISM??

BAPTISM IS:

- a Sacrament: an outward, visible sign of an inward, invisible grace
- what God does for us and in us: God claims us in the waters
- It makes us a member of Christ's body (the Church), unites us to his life, death, and resurrection
- A sign of our forgiveness & new birth (water makes us clean)

BAPTISM IS NOT:

- a free ticket into heaven
- a repeatable event--like John Calipari, it is ONE and DONE
- merely a *symbol* of our confession; something is actually happening

BAPTISM IN PRACTICE

-We baptize all ages, because baptism is not effective based on our UNDERSTANDING of it, but based on God's activity (GRACE)

-We preach that we all must RESPOND to our baptism through a life of FAITH (meaning a TRUST in Jesus in what we believe and how we live)

-We do not have a preference on HOW we baptize (immersion, sprinkling, pouring) because WET is WET

-We do not RE-BAPTIZE because baptism is what God does; just as Jesus only needed to die once for salvation, so we only need to be joined to his life, death, and resurrection once in baptism

COMING UP...

Week 2: How do Methodists read the Bible?

(Case study: infant baptism)

Week 3: Grace Pt. 1: How do we GET saved?

(human depravity, prevenient & justifying grace)

Week 4: Grace Pt. 2: How do we STAY saved?

(sanctification, holiness, Christian perfection)

Week 5: What unites United Methodism?

(U.S. Methodism, the global UMC, present issues)