



Overview of this week

- ❖ Introduction to the class
- ❖ Our theological task and method
- ❖ How can we come to know God?
 - Natural theology
 - Special revelation
 - The Wesleyan Quadrilateral
 - Knowing and being known



Introduction to this course

- ❖ The syllabus
 - Course description
 - Our objectives
 - The class schedule
 - We'll keep coming back to the same topics over and over
- ❖ The index cards
- ❖ The website and e-mail list
- ❖ The handouts and weekly worksheets
- ❖ How we'll learn
 - We'll be mixing "deep thoughts" and application
 - Teaching the head and forming the heart



Theology??!!

- ❖ Theology
 - The contemplation and study of God! What better use of our time and efforts could there be?
- ❖ Everyone is a theologian
 - All people, in all places, at all times contemplate the most fundamental questions of our existence. Their answers shape their worldview!
 - The only question is whether we will be a better theologian or a poorer theologian.
- ❖ Why do we – Christians -- “do” theology?
 - So we can come to know God! So we can be better disciples of Jesus Christ! We must always remind each other of this. Sometimes, it is easy to forget.
- ❖ The church needs more amateur theologians
 - Amateur – from the French word, *amator*, meaning “lover”!



How we'll go about this

- ❖ We could begin with a logical, well reasoned analysis of God's existence and attributes – but we won't.
 - Though popular, this approach is too cluttered with many Platonic (Greek) notions of god, the first mover.
 - An example – the nature and story of the soul
- ❖ We'll begin with the Bible and work outward.
 - As best as we can, we'll undertake a biblically-based theology. The UMC affirms that "scripture is the primary source and criterion of Christian doctrine."
 - We'll see how the great creeds, confessions, and Methodism's own Articles of Religion & Statement of Faith are systematic expressions of biblical teachings.
- ❖ We will strive to find the ecumenical faith that all Christians – Roman Catholic, Protestant, & Orthodox – have affirmed for most of the last 2000 years.
 - Our guide will be a Methodist theologian, Thomas Oden

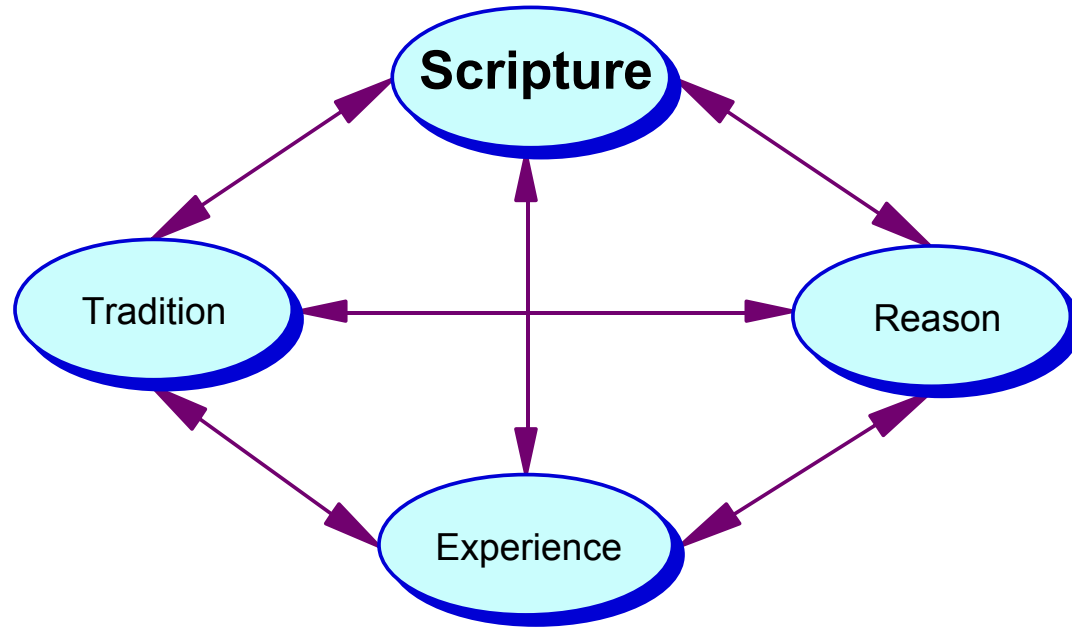


Methodists and theology

- ❖ For United Methodists, our theological task is:
 - Both critical and constructive
 - Both individual and communal
 - Contextual and incarnational
 - “God’s supreme mode of self-revelation is in Jesus”
 - Our theological reflection is energized by our involvement in the Church and the world.
 - Essentially practical!
- ❖ We read the Bible and contemplate God as a believing community under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.



The Wesleyan Quadrilateral



“So I search and ponder parallel passages of scripture, comparing spiritual things with spiritual things. I meditate on them with all the attention and seriousness of which my mind is capable. If any doubt still remains, I consult others who are experienced in the things of God. Next, I look to the writings of those who although they are dead, yet they still speak. And what I learn in this way, I teach.” by John Wesley, in his Preface to his collected sermons, 1746