

**B231 Frameworks for  
Applied Theology**

**Friday**

**Dr Paul Coulter**

# Today's timetable

## Morning – Theological and Personal Reflection

- |    |  |               |
|----|--|---------------|
| 1. | Experiential and reflective learning           | 09.55 – 10.45 |
| 2. | Authority in theological & personal reflection | 11.00 – 11.50 |
| 3. | Practising reflection                          | 12.00 – 12.50 |

## Afternoon – Reflecting on life and death

- |    |   |               |
|----|---|---------------|
| 4. | The sanctity of life and certainty of death | 13.40 – 14.30 |
| 5. | Group work – questions from experience      | 14.40 – 15.30 |
| 6. | Feedback on reflection                      | 15.40 – 16.15 |

# **B231 Frameworks for Applied Theology**

## **Experiential and Reflective Learning**

# Outline

- a. Is theology ever not practical?
  - *From applied theology to practical (integrative) theology*
  
- b. I wasn't really myself
  - *The what and why of personal reflection*
  
- c. Looking three ways
  - *The how of personal reflection*



# **Is theology ever not practical?**

From applied theology to practical  
(integrative) theology

# Disciplines within Theology

Biblical  
studies

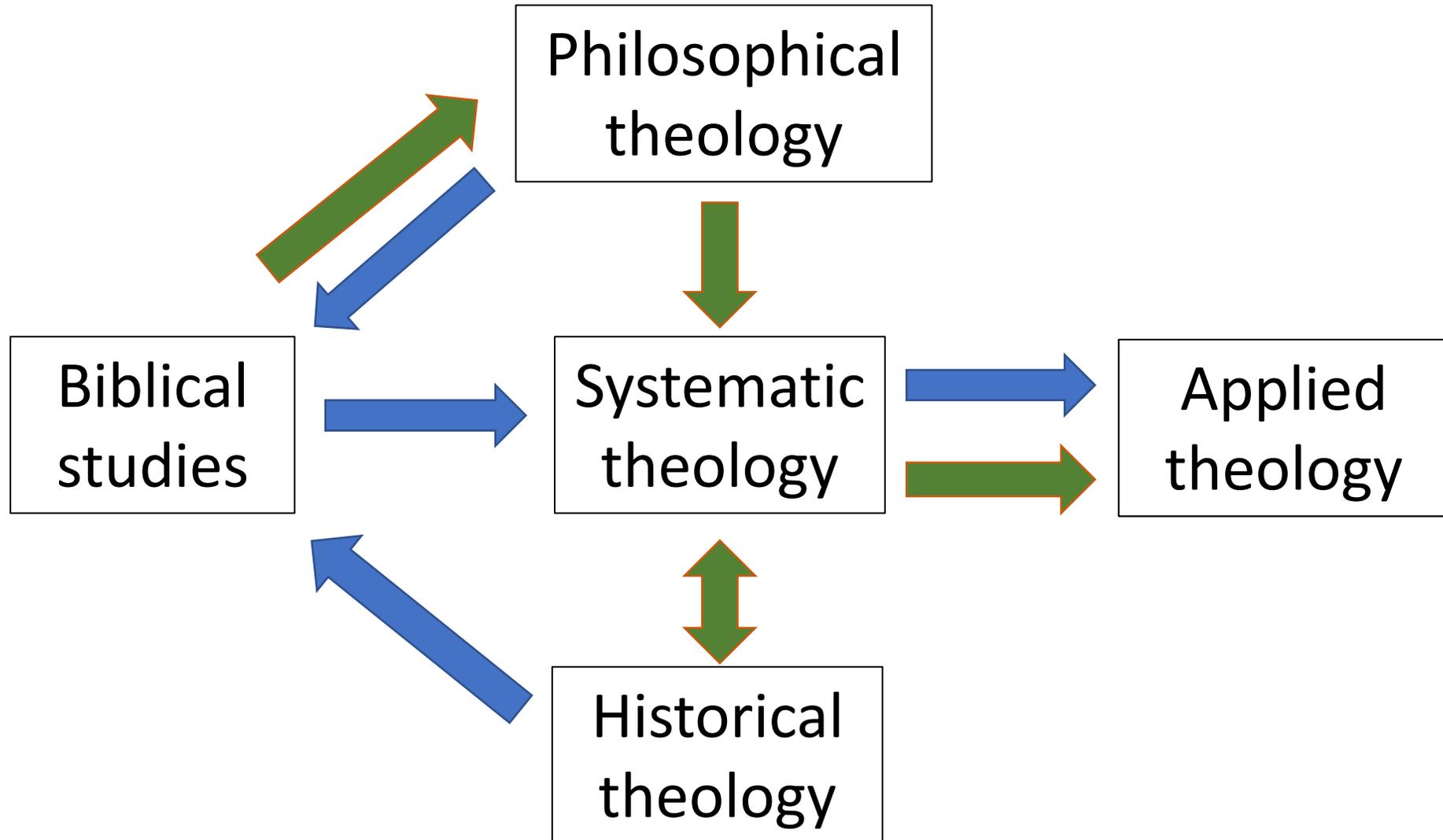
Historical  
theology

Philosophical  
theology

Practical  
theology

Systematic  
theology

# Making connections

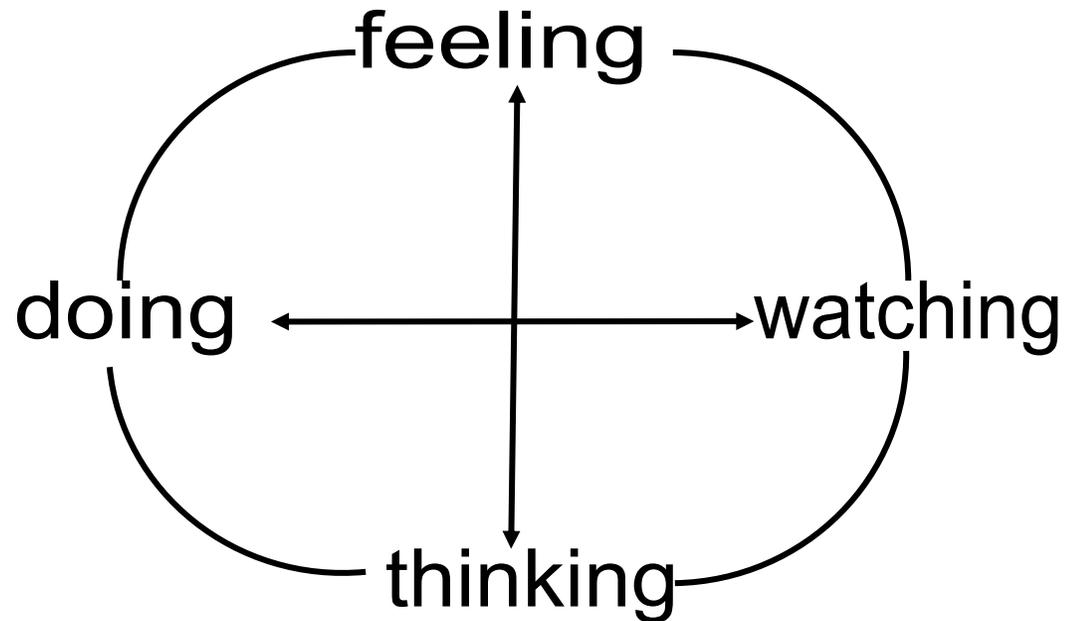


# David Kolb, *Experiential Learning*

“Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience”

*Processing* (how we approach tasks) [x]

*Perception* (how we respond to the experience) [y]



David A. Kolb (1984) *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development* (Vol. 1). Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, p. 38.

Experiential  
Learning  
Cycles

**Act**

Concrete Experience  
*Facts (What Happened?)*  
Theory of Action

**Reflect**

Reflective Observation  
*Feelings (What Did I Experience?)*  
Assess Behavior & Consequences

**Conceptualize**

Abstract Conceptualization  
*Findings (Why Did  
This Happen?)*  
Revise Theory

**Apply**

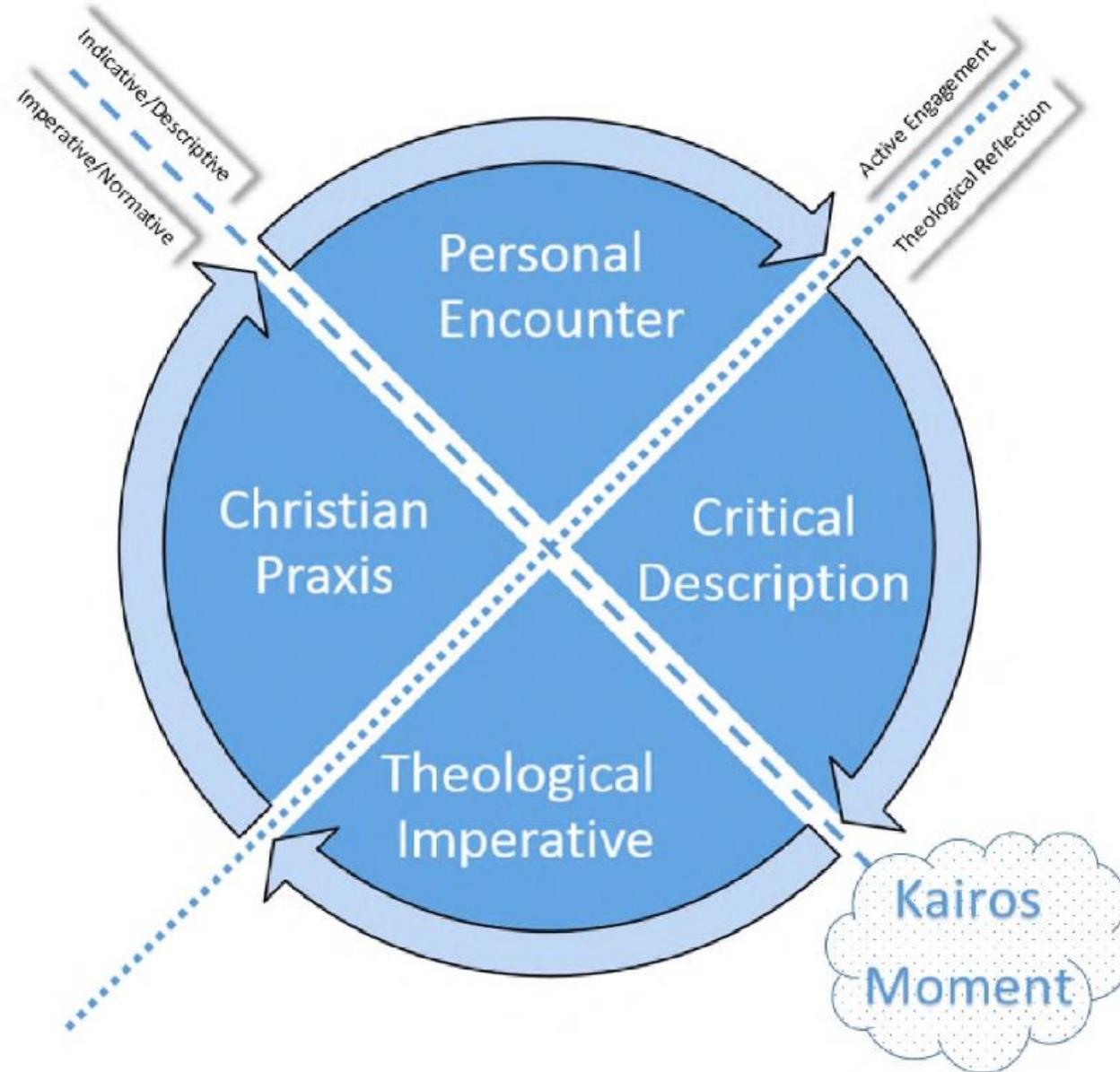
Active Experimentation  
*Futures (What Will I Do?)*  
Implement Revised Theory

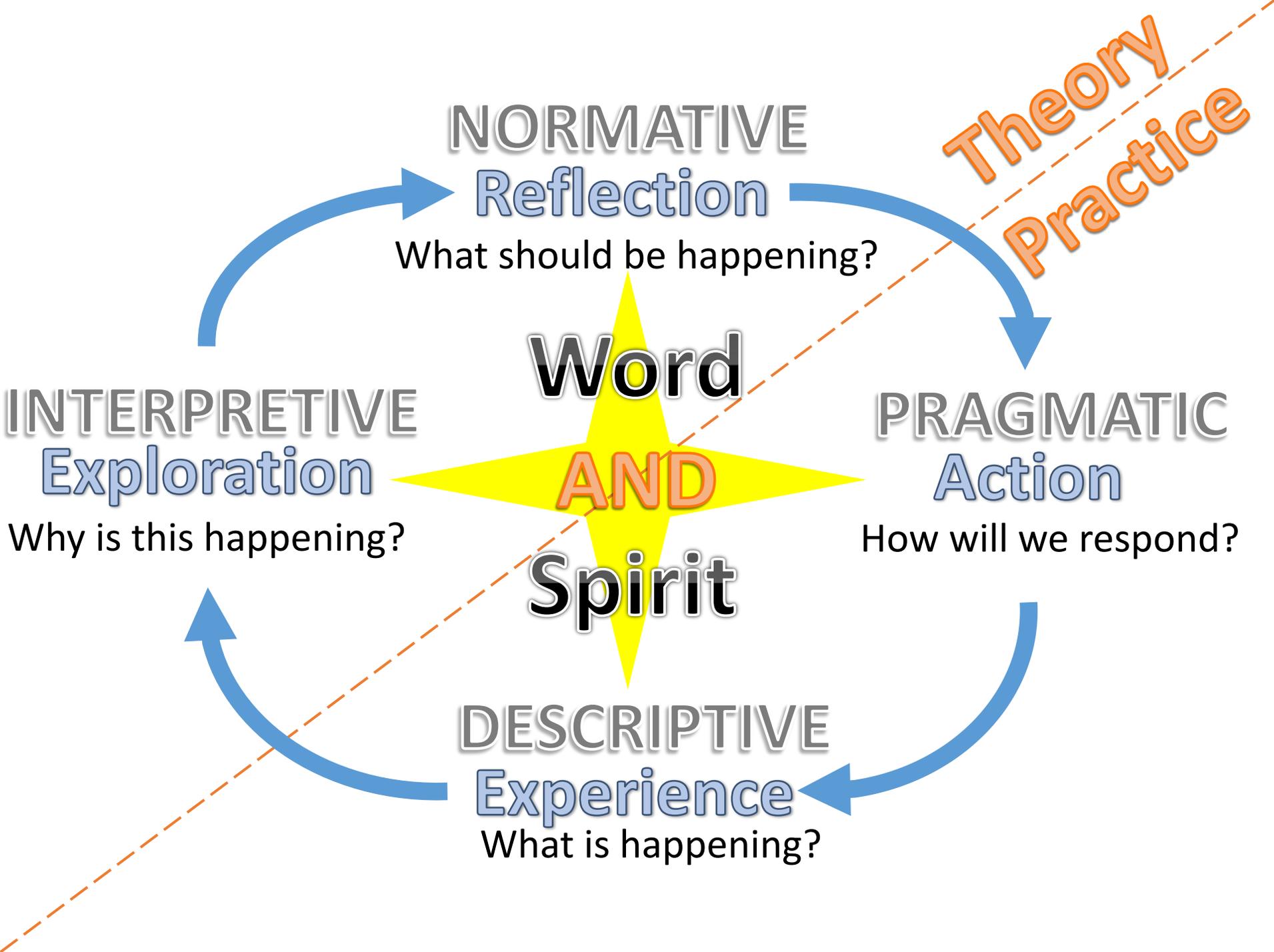
1. David Kolb
2. Roger Greenaway
3. Chris Argyris & Donald Schön

compiled by Andrea Corney

[www.edbatista.com/2007/10/experiential.html](http://www.edbatista.com/2007/10/experiential.html)

# Theological Imperative Model of Practical Theology







# **I wasn't really myself**

The what and why of personal reflection

# What are we reflecting on?

- An experience
- An issue [theological reflection]
- A person (me!) [personal reflection]
- **ALL THREE!**

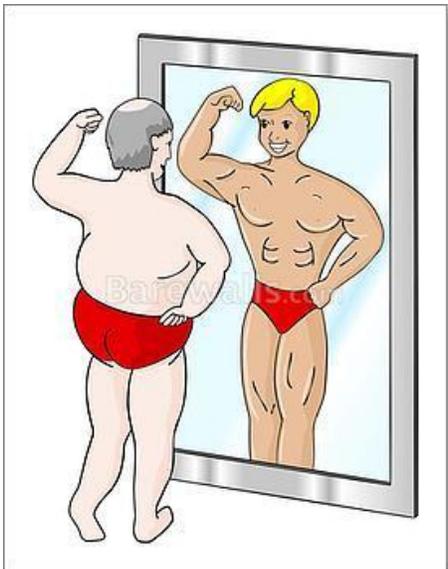
# **What is personal reflection?**

active, persistent, prayerful examination  
of personal experience and beliefs  
in light of Scripture and Christian tradition  
in order to learn about oneself and about God  
and so make plans for greater faithfulness.

# Why reflect on oneself?

The irony of life is that it is lived forward but understood backward

Søren Kierkegaard, quoted in J.J. Loughran (2002) 'Effective Reflective Practice: In Search of Meaning in Learning About Teaching', *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53, p.42



Self-awareness



Clearer insights



Improved actions

# Benefits of reflection

**Enhances theoretical learning**, helping memory and application

J.J. Loughran (2002) 'Effective Reflective Practice: In Search of Meaning in Learning About Teaching', *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53, p.42

**Enriches practice**, saving us from “tunnel vision”

S. Koole, T. *et al.* (2011) 'Factors Confounding the Assessment of Reflection: A Critical Review'. *BMC Medical Education*, 11, p.104

**Equips for lifelong learning**, which is often “unplanned, experiential and emergent”

T. Bourner (2003) 'Assessing reflective learning', *Education + Training*, 45, p.267-272

# Levels of reflection

Good reflection

**7. Premise reflection**  
*Why?*

Limited reflection

**4. Content reflection**  
*What?*

**5. Process reflection**  
*How?*

**6. Content & Process**  
*What & How?*

Non-reflective action  
+ thoughts / feelings

**2. Introspection**

**3. Thoughtful action**

Non-reflective action

**1. Habitual actions**



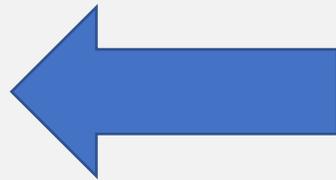
# Looking three ways

The how of personal reflection

# 3 steps in reflection

1

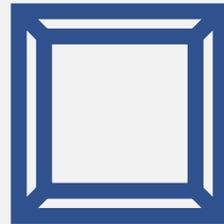
Look back



**Understanding**

2

Look in



**Insight**

3

Look forward



**Faithfulness**

# Looking back - understanding

- What happened that most surprised you and what was familiar?
- What is about your past experiences or convictions that led to your response?
- What went well and not so well?
- What patterns can you recognise in your experience?
- What was the most / least fulfilling part of it?
- What does the experience and your reaction to it suggest to you about your values?
- What happened that contradicted / confirmed your prior beliefs?

# Looking in – insight

- Is our feeling appropriate or could it be an 'over-reaction' or unfair?
- How might you have reacted differently (perhaps more effectively or appropriately)?
- Could this observation mean something other than we instinctively thought it meant?
- Are there different interpretations of why someone might have acted this way?



# Looking in – insight

- What does the Bible say about this kind of situation, feeling or thought?
- What do other authors suggest as possible explanations?
- How do you feel about that experience now compared with how you felt about it at the time?
- How do various theories help explain your experience or how might your experience modify them?
- What might God be saying to you in this moment of reflection?

# Looking forward – faithfulness

- What does the experience suggest to you about your strengths, weaknesses and areas for growth?
- Do you need to repair any relationships or seek forgiveness for anything?
- What might you do the same or differently as a result of this experience and your reflections on it?
- What actions do your reflections lead you to?
- Who / what might hinder you from doing things differently and how might you handle this?

# **An exercise**

Thinking about your first interaction with another person after arrival this morning:

- A. Look Back** – how did you feel and react and why?
- B. Look In** – what is God saying about your reaction?
- C. Look forward** – how might you do better in future?

# **B231 Frameworks for Applied Theology**

## **Practising personal reflection**

# **Practice – Step 1 [10 minutes alone]**

Thinking about an interaction with another person before class this morning, either at home, on the way or after you arrived:

- A. Look Back** – how did you feel and react and why?
- B. Look In** – what is God saying about your reaction?
- C. Look forward** – how might you do better in future?

## **Practice – Step 2 [15 minutes in pairs]**

Describe your reflection to each other. Not only what happened, but what you think it meant (why questions) and what you might learn from it for future action.

Feed back to each other any additional insights or questions that arise as you listen. Especially share if you think there might be an alternative interpretation.

## **Practice – Step 3 [20 minutes together]**

What did you learn through this process?

What level was your reflection at (of the seven levels suggested earlier)?

When encountering different interpretations or possible responses, how can you decide which is correct?

# **B231 Frameworks for Applied Theology**

## **Authority in Reflection**

# Outline

a. How can we know God's perspective?

- *Sources of truth in theological reflection*

b. Who decides what is right?

- *Authority in theological reflection*

c. 'Why do we need the Bible?

- *The role and goal of Scripture in theological reflection*

**AUTHORITY**

**How can we know  
God's perspective?**

Sources of truth in theological reflection

# What sources?

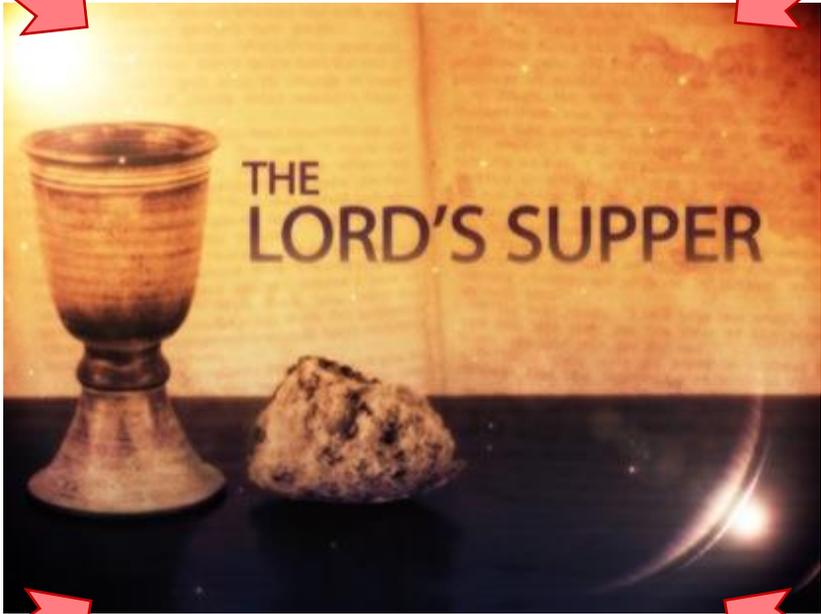
What do we base our ideas about God, faith and church on?

What *should* we base them on?



Scripture / Tradition /  
Church

Social / physical  
sciences

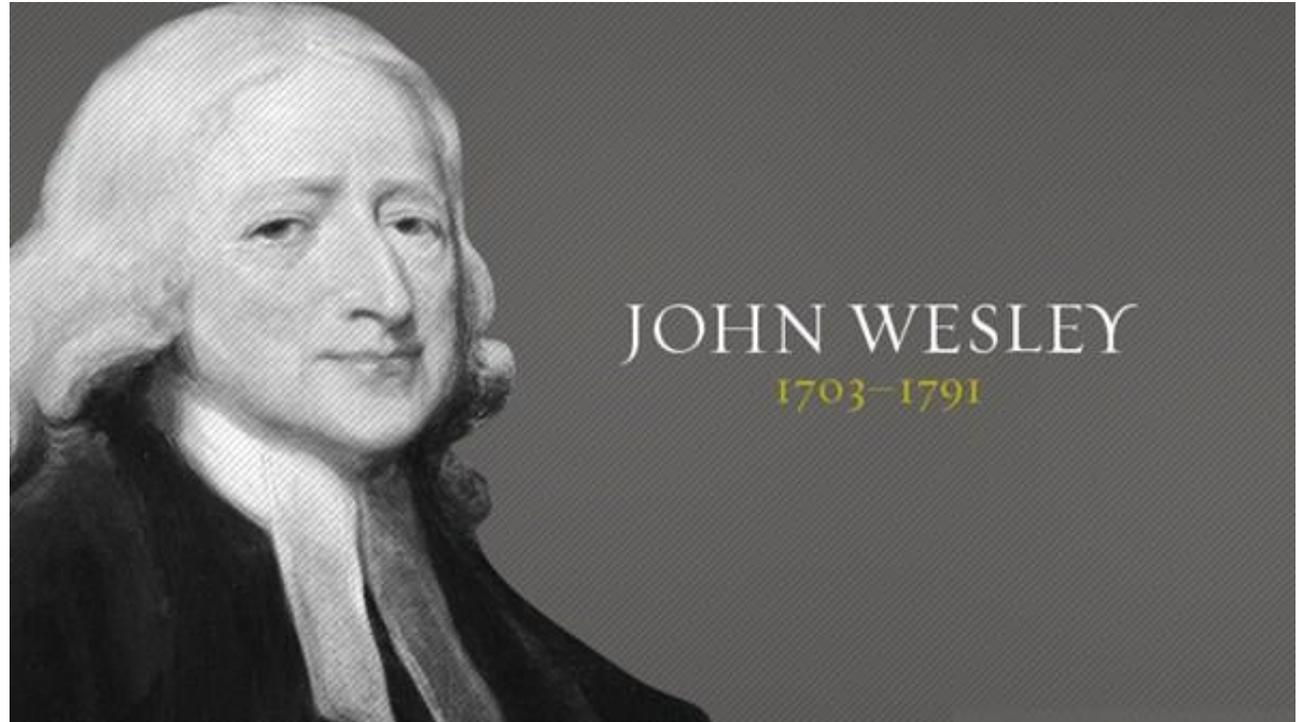


Values / Culture

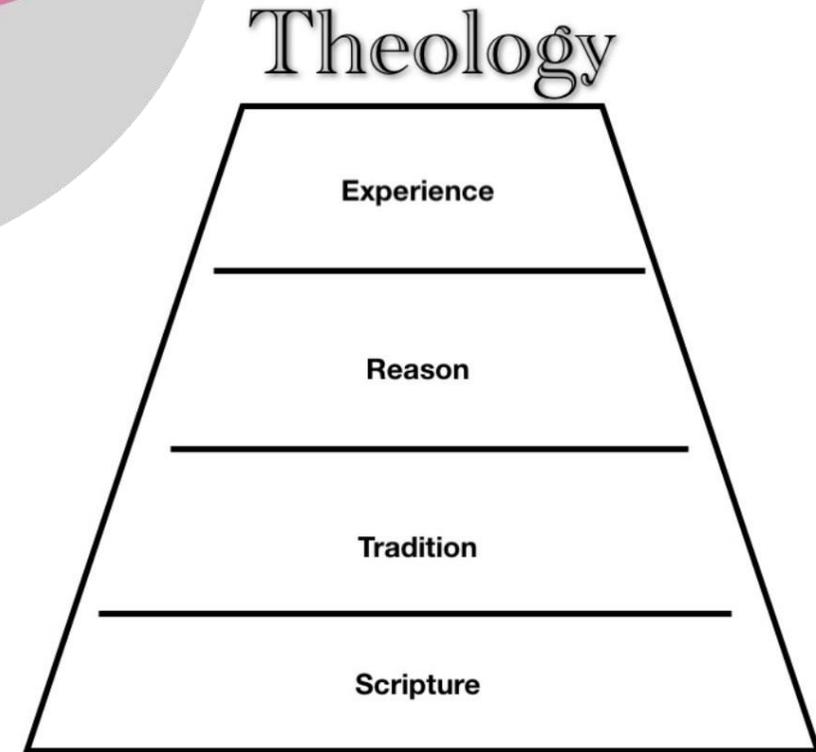
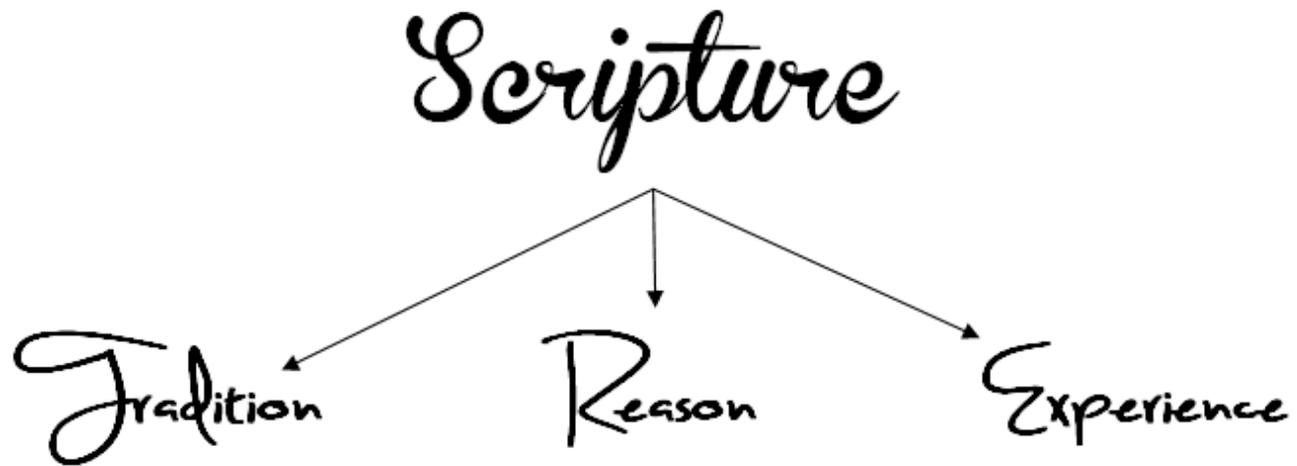
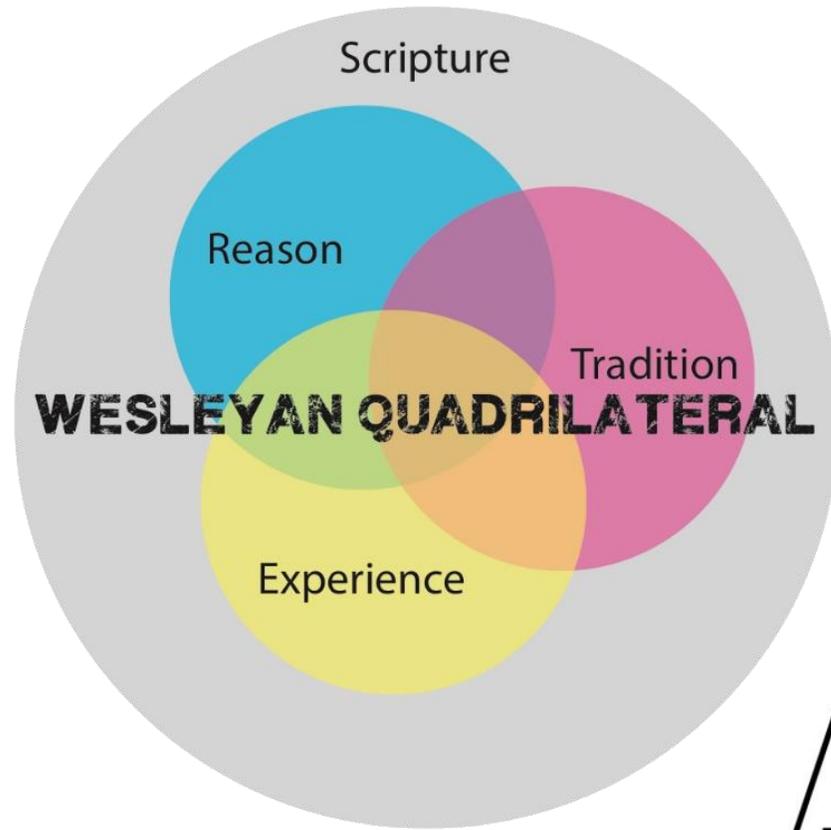
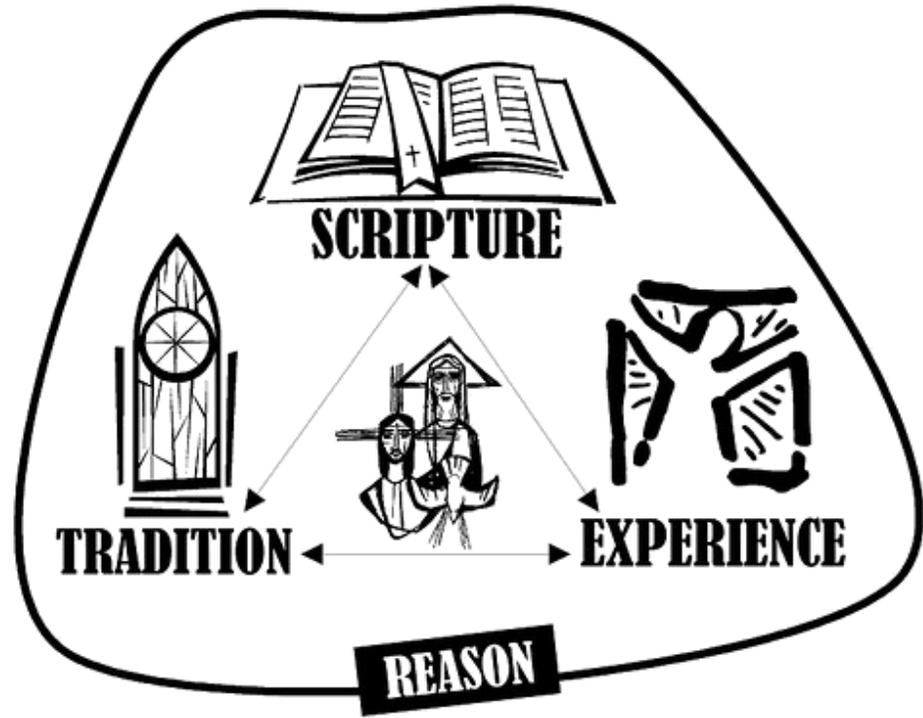
Experience / Effect

# Wesleyan quadrilateral

- Scripture
- Tradition
- Experience
- Reason



How would you depict the relationship between these four?



[Wesley's] working concepts of doctrinal authority were carefully worked out: they were complex and dynamically balanced. When challenged for his authority, on any question, his first appeal was to the Holy Bible [...].

Even so he was well aware that Scripture alone had rarely settled any controverted point of doctrine. [...] Thus, though never as a substitute or corrective, he would appeal to the 'primitive church' and to Christian tradition at large as competent, complimentary witnesses to 'the meaning' of this Scripture or that. [...]

But Scripture and tradition would not suffice without the good offices (positive and negative) of critical reason. Thus he insisted on logical coherence as an authorized referee in any contest between contrary propositions or arguments. And yet this was not enough. It was, as he himself knew, the vital experience of assurance of one's sins forgiven that clinched the matter.

Thus we can see in Wesley a distinctive theological method, with Scripture as the pre-eminent norm but interfaced with tradition, reason, and Christian experience as the dynamic and interactive aids in the interpretation of the Word of God in Scripture.'

Albert Outler (1991) 'The Wesleyan Quadrilateral – in John Wesley', in Thomas Langford (ed.) *Doctrine and Theology in the United Methodist Church*, Nashville: Abingdon, p.86

**AUTHORITY**

**Who decides what we  
should do?**

Authority in theological reflection

final authority resides in **biblical revelation** over against residing in reason, tradition, or experience, which are conjoint and secondary sources for understanding

Robert Pazmiño (2008) *Foundational Issues in Christian Education: An Introduction in Evangelical Perspective*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Grand Rapids: BakerAcademic, p.59

# The authority of Scripture

- Old Testament laws and prophecies claim to be the words of God
- Jesus upheld the Old Testament (e.g., Matthew 5:17) and understood His life as its fulfillment (Luke 24:25-27,44-47; John 5:39)
- The apostles' teaching was foundational for the Church (Acts 2:42; Ephesians 2:20)
- New Testament writers:
  - quote and describe the Old Testament as authoritative Scripture (e.g., Romans 15:4; 2 Timothy 3:16-17)
  - knew they were recording the gospel authoritatively for future generations (e.g., 1 Corinthians 7:10, cf. 12)
  - place New Testament writings on a par with the Old Testament (2 Peter 1:12-21; 3:2, 15-16; Jude v17)

# Bibliolatry?

We must not separate:

➤ *God's person AND His words*

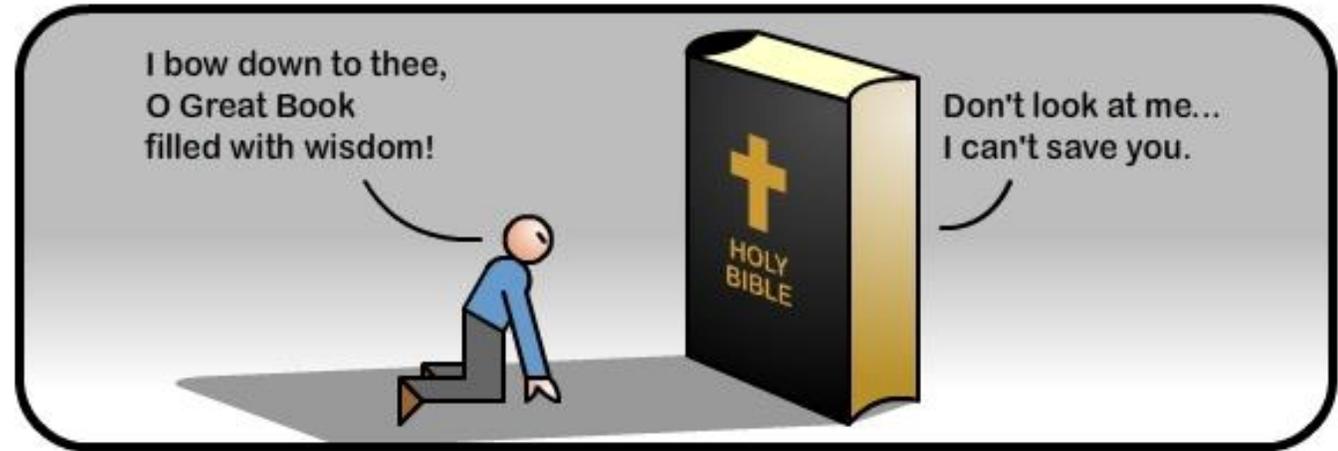
- Psalm 33:4; John 6:63; 12:48

➤ *Christ AND the word that testifies to Him*

- John 5:39-40; Acts 1:21-22

➤ *The word AND the Spirit*

- 1 Corinthians 2:14; 1 John 4:6

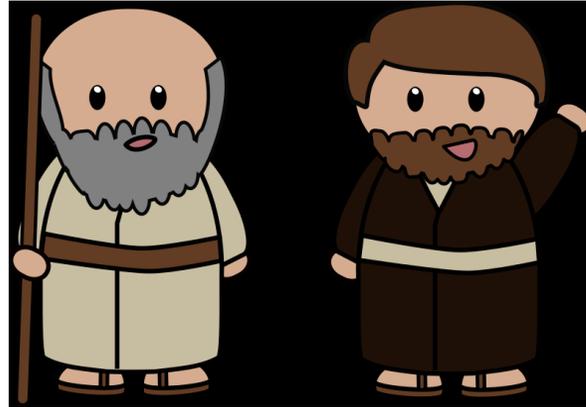


# The Word of God



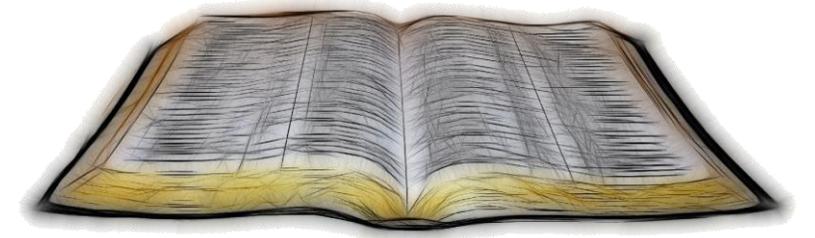
**The  
incarnate  
Word**

John 1:1-14;  
Revelation 19:13



**The  
proclaimed  
Word**

2 Corinthians 4:2



**The  
written  
Word**

Mark 7:13

# God's authority through Scripture

the phrase 'authority of scripture' can only make Christian sense if it is shorthand for 'the authority of the triune God, exercised somehow through scripture'

N.T. Wright (2005) *Scripture and the Authority of God*. London: SPCK, p.17

Scripture



Tradition



Reason



Experience



**AUTHORITY**

# **Why do we need the Bible?**

The role and goal of Scripture in  
theological reflection

# Scripture in Practical Theology

Ballard (2012, p.165ff.) suggests four ways in which Scripture can be used in Practical Theology:

1. A resource in pastoral care and counselling
2. A focal point in worship and spiritual formation
3. Wisdom in theological reflection
4. An object of empirical research

A fifth option?

Scripture as foundation and 'norming norm'

# Scripture's origin, role and goal

All Scripture is God-breathed

and is useful for **teaching, rebuking, correcting**  
and **training** in righteousness,

**so that**

the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped  
for every good work.

2 Timothy 3: 16-17

# Scripture's goal

**Orthodoxy**

right belief

faithful worship

**Orthopraxy**

right behaviour

faithful practice

**'Orthopathy'**

right experience

faithful character

# Scripture's role

**PERFORMATIVE**

true emotions / thoughts to express

**FORMATIVE**

true examples to heed

**NORMATIVE**

God's true story to indwell

**TRANSFORMATIVE**

universal truths to obey

# Normative Scripture – the Gospel

- **God rules** (creation) – what was God's intention?
- **We rebelled** (sin) – what sins of belief and behaviour?
- **God rescues** (Christ) – how is Christ Lord over this?
- **We respond** (faith) – what does obedience look like?
- **God restores** (Spirit) – what hope and help are there?

