

## SOMY - Thinking Critically - The Art of Being Right?

Date and Time: Sat, 2 April, 13:00 – 15:30

Venue: Trinity Methodist Church, 34 Serangoon Garden

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### Part 1: Questions about the Bible

- Is it important to be right? What do we mean by “right”? Can you be wrong? Can you be right and the other person is right also? [Absolute Truths vs. Partial Truths]

#### The blind men and the elephant

A Jain (Indian religion) version of the story says that six blind men were asked to determine what an elephant looked like by feeling different parts of the elephant's body. The blind man who feels a leg says the elephant is like a pillar; the one who feels the tail says the elephant is like a rope; the one who feels the trunk says the elephant is like a tree branch; the one who feels the ear says the elephant is like a hand fan; the one who feels the belly says the elephant is like a wall; and the one who feels the tusk says the elephant is like a solid pipe.

A king explains to them:

“All of you are right. The reason every one of you is telling it differently is because each one of you touched the different part of the elephant. So, actually the elephant has all the features you mentioned.”

- Is there a right (or objective) way to understand the biblical text? There is no one absolute interpretation. There are only good or bad interpretations. Our task today is to understand what makes good interpretation. Every text requires interpretation. Every interpretation requires criticism.
- Is the Bible theologically true or factually true? Facts vs. Truths? What is the difference? “Parables are *true* but they are not *factual*.”
- Is the Bible without errors (inerrancy) or it is reliable and sufficient for us? What is the difference?

### The Bible: What it is?

- 1 The Bible is the inspired Word of God. The Bible is true. It is God's Word in human words. But it is not without human errors.
- 2 It is God's self-revelation. We cannot know God without God first revealing Himself to us.
- 3 It is God-breathed. This means that it is approved and accepted by God as His way of communicating with the people.

#### **2 Tim 3:16-17**

<sup>16</sup>All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup>that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

The biblical writers witnessed what God was doing in his time (event) and felt the need to record them. It arose from a very intimate relationship with God and the world (land and the people). Very often they may not be eye-witnesses to the actual event, but the stories of these important events (Exodus, etc.) and people (David, prophets, etc.) were passed down to them orally in tradition.

It does not mean that the biblical writers were “possessed by the Spirit” and wrote the Bible accordingly, aka Prophet Muhammad (founder of Islam, received revelation from angel Gabriel in cave on Mt. Hira, near Mecca, c. 610-3 BCE) or Joseph Smith Jr. (founder of Mormon, 1827-30). [pic] Joseph Smith dictating the Book of Mormon by reading reflections in a seer stone at the bottom of his hat. His wife was tasked to write down exactly what he dictated.

- 4 It is authoritative; it has authority over how we live our lives.
- 5 It is reliable. Oral tradition was an important and common way of communication and preserving history. Tradition is what God uses to pass on His Word from one generation to another.
- 6 It is sufficient for believing. It does not tell us everything about God but it tells us enough for us to believe in Him.
- 7 It is a historical document but not written as history as we understand it today. It is more important for the writers to record the events than accurately denoting the dates and the numbers. Event is important, Time and Numbers are not so important. Authorship (who wrote the books) and Dating (where were they written) are not important for us. Debates on these issues are on-going and theories on these changes every 10 years!
- 8 It is the story of God and the People. The Bible is God's Story, inspired by God written in human words by Man. It is not entirely a historical book but it has parts of history in it. It is a story about how God works with various people in history. It may not be historically and factually accurate (by today's standards) but it is historically reliable and sufficient.
- 9 It contains various styles (genres) of writing: History, Narratives (Stories), Poetry, Laws, Gospels, Letters, Parables, Prophecies, Wisdom Literature (wise sayings), etc. Each book may contain various genres within itself. E.g. Genesis 1-3 is a poetic parable, not a historical or scientific proof about the origin of the world. It tells us that God created the world. This is the task and purpose of the Bible. It does not tell us exactly how the world was created. This is the task of science. Gen. 1-3 is the ancient writer's way of describing about their God they worship, of how He is different from the rest of the gods in and around their region. There are many similarities between the biblical stories and the ANE stories because they exist at the same time period and that was how stories about deities were written. It does not mean that the Bible copy from them or vice versa. E.g. the account of the Flood is found in many ANE historical records.

### **The Bible: What it is not?**

#### **John Goldingay: Reading the OT as the Word of God in its own Right<sup>1</sup>**

1. It is not true that the NT lies hidden in the OT and the OT is revealed in the NT—or if it is, this is not the most helpful way into understanding this part of the Word of God. The OT is the record of how God really related to people and really spoke to them in ways that were designed for them to understand. The NT then tells us that the OT is the inspired and authoritative word of God and it therefore implies that we should take it with absolute seriousness.
2. It is not true that Jesus is all God has to say. God has lots of other things to say, and has said lots of them in the OT. If we conform the OT to what the NT says, we miss these. If we want to understand what God wants us to understand from the OT, we do best to forget about the NT because that tends to narrow down our perspective.
3. It is not true that the OT God is a God of wrath, the NT God is a God of love. In both Testaments, God is one who loves to love people, but is prepared to be tough when necessary.
4. It is not true that the OT is a religion of law, the NT a religion of grace. In both Testaments, God relates to people on the basis of grace but then expects them to live a life of obedience.
5. It is not true that the OT is a book of stories about people who are meant to be examples to us. You only have to read the stories to see that. Both Testaments are books of stories about what God did through people despite

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<sup>1</sup> [http://documents.fuller.edu/sot/faculty/goldingay/cp\\_content/homepage/homepage.htm](http://documents.fuller.edu/sot/faculty/goldingay/cp_content/homepage/homepage.htm) Articles: Dr. John's Guide to OT Study

who they were, not because of who they were. If anyone is an example to us in the OT, it is God, not people such as Abraham, Moses, or David (see Lev 19:2).

6. It is not true that the OT doesn't mean what it says. When it says God loves us, it means that. When it says God had a change of mind, it means that.
7. It is not true that the OT describes God as knowing everything. No doubt God *can* know everything, but God often finds things out by looking and asking.
8. It is not true that the important thing about the OT is that it prophesies Jesus. The important thing about it is that it is the record of how God spoke to the people of God and how God acted in their lives. So we can discover from it more about what God is like and what God says to us.

### **Why the need to think critically?**

Too many believers believe without understanding their faith deeply. Too many Christians follow Christ blindly.

The decline of religion and the rise of atheism. BBC reports on 22 Mar 2011<sup>2</sup>, that "Religion may be extinct in nine nations" according to a study.

We need a new understanding to our faith. Christianity is not a religion, but a faith belief between God and us as a community. This faith is not blind faith. We may not have all the answers, but it must be a faith that seeks understanding. Christians must always be transformed by the renewal of our mind.

### **Biblical Principles:**

#### **Romans 12:1-3<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. <sup>2</sup> Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

#### **Matt. 22:37-40**

<sup>37</sup>And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. <sup>38</sup>This is the great and first commandment. <sup>39</sup>And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. <sup>40</sup>On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

### **Who can help us understand God's Word? The Holy Spirit**

#### **1 Cor. 2:9-11**

<sup>9</sup>But, as it is written,

"What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,  
nor the heart of man imagined,  
what God has prepared for those who love him"—

<sup>10</sup>these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. <sup>11</sup>For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-12811197>

<sup>3</sup> All passages are quoted from the ESV translation of the Bible.

## John 14:26

<sup>26</sup>But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

This does not mean that the Spirit will answer every question we have in the Bible. It teaches us what we need to learn about God so that we can live as God's people of faith.

Question: Isn't the Bible clear on everything? Why do we need to think critically? It's so obvious in the Bible!

### To answer or not answer a fool?

#### Proverbs 26:4-5 (NIV)

<sup>4</sup> Do not answer a fool according to his folly,  
or you yourself will be just like him.

<sup>5</sup> Answer a fool according to his folly,  
or he will be wise in his own eyes.

CONTEXT!

### Understanding Interpretation

1. Every text needs interpretation. Every text contains a context in which it was written.
2. A text without a context is a pretext (pretense, a smokescreen)!  
Pretext: Critics have accused United States President George W. Bush of using the September 11th, 2001 attacks and faulty intelligence about the existence of weapons of mass destruction as a pretext for the war in Iraq. [wiki<sup>4</sup>]  
Other examples:
  - Pastor Kong Hee, City Harvest Church [9 reason y Jesus is rich, youtube<sup>5</sup>]
  - Counter Argument by Dr. Claude Mariottini: Was Jesus Rich or Poor?<sup>6</sup> (See also John Piper - Why I abominate the prosperity gospel, youtube<sup>7</sup>)
  - Comment by wheella: If Jesus was rich, why did he tell the rich man to give away his money and to follow him?
  - "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" Matt 19:24 (NIV)
3. We also exist in a context when we interpret. We are always somewhere (socially, culturally, historically, linguistically) and never nowhere when we interpret. [frame of reference]
4. Contemporary Significance and Application comes at the final stage of interpretation.

### Common dubious statements made by Christians...

1. God wants to bless us so that we can be a blessing to the whole world. [Prosperity Gospel]
  - a. Has not God already bless the world richly since the creation?
  - b. Does it mean that if we are poor, we cannot bless others?
  - c. Only the rich can give? Mother Theresa? Gandhi?
  - d. See 1 Tim 6:6-9

<sup>6</sup>Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment, <sup>7</sup>for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. <sup>8</sup>But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. <sup>9</sup>But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.
2. This is the Word of God. I did not say it, the Bible did. Therefore, you better believe what I said. [Claiming authority of the Bible and transferring it to the speaker.]

<sup>4</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pretext>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JxTlI8yOkpl>

<sup>6</sup> <http://doctor.claudemariottini.com/2006/10/was-jesus-rich-or-poor.html>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iLRue4nwJaA>

- a. Quoting biblical passages out of context and pushing your own agenda is not only dishonest, it is unbiblical.
3. God did not answer your prayer because you were not faithful enough. [Lacking faith]
- a. See Matthew 26:36, 39, 42
    - <sup>36</sup>Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to His disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray."
    - <sup>39</sup>And He went a little beyond *them*, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will."
    - <sup>42</sup>He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, "My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done."
  - b. Did Jesus not pray to God to remove the cup (of suffering and death)? Jesus was not spared from the cross. Does this mean he was not faithful enough?
  - c. We often do not complete our prayer with an important part of the Lord's prayer, "your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."
4. Quotations on prayer. Compare.
- a. Prayer does not change God, but it changes him who prays. (Soren Kierkegaard)
  - b. The whole meaning of prayer is that we may know God. (Oswald Chambers)
  - c. When we pray to God we must be seeking nothing - nothing. (Saint Francis of Assisi)
  - d. Prayer moves the hand that moves the world. (John Aikman Wallace)

### Case Study: Women in Church Ministry<sup>8</sup>

1 Timothy 2:8-15 (NIV)

<sup>8</sup> Therefore I want the men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing. <sup>9</sup> I also want the women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, adorning themselves, not with elaborate hairstyles or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, <sup>10</sup> but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God.

<sup>11</sup> A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. <sup>12</sup> I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet. <sup>13</sup> For Adam was formed first, then Eve. <sup>14</sup> And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. <sup>15</sup> But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.

- 1. Males should pray with their hands lifted up (2:8).
- 2. Males should pray without anger or disputing (2:8).
- 3. Women should dress modestly (2:9).
- 4. Women should not have elaborate hairstyles or wear gold or pearls or expensive clothing (2:9).
- 5. Women should have good deeds (2:10).
- 6. Women should be silent and quiet (2:11, 12).
- 7. Women should not teach or have authority (2:12).

Craig Keener: Paul silences women in regard to asking questions: "If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands [if they are married] at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak [inquire about something they don't yet understand] in the church."<sup>9</sup> [Don't ask stupid questions!]

### Why the restriction?

Because these women were not yet educated theologically or biblically as well as the men. [Temporary silencing]

<sup>8</sup> Scott McKnight, *The Blue Parakeet*, pp. 186-188.

<sup>9</sup> Scott McKnight, *The Blue Parakeet*, pp. 193-194.

Women today are not uneducated; in fact, some are more educated than their male-counterparts. The importance of education – of knowing the Bible and theology and having pastoral gifts and skills – and once these basics are met, anyone with gifts should be encouraged to use their gifts. There are many educated women in the Bible who teaches, preaches and prophesizes: Missionary Priscilla (Acts 18, Romans 16:34), Junia “prominent among the apostles” (Romans 16:7) and Deaconess Phoebe (Romans 16:1).<sup>10</sup>

Women in the past had long hair and when their hair is not tied up or covered, they look like prostitutes giving the impression that Christian gatherings were sexual in nature. This is no longer relevant in our culture today. If we demand women today to wear head dress in church, something totally contrary to culture that non-Christians are offended or turned off, may do the same damage to the gospel.<sup>11</sup>

The key for Paul was not to “keep the women silent” but to “teach the women.” His principle was “learning before teaching.” Men, too, need learning before teaching.

Scot McKnight: “God spoke through Moses in Moses’ ways for Moses’ days, through David in David’s ways for David’s days, through Jesus in Jesus’ ways for Jesus’ days, and through John in John’s ways for John’s days.” (The Blue Parakeet, p. 210)

Scot McKnight: “Our relationship to the Bible is actually, if we are properly engaged, a relationship with the God of the Bible.” (The Blue Parakeet, p. 211)

## **Part 2: How to think critically?**

### **See-Judge-Act Method**

1. See Observe the setting, the scene.
2. Judge Examine what our Lord does, decide why he acts in this way, and what he would expect of his followers.
3. Act Apply his teaching in your life

“The goal of See-Judge-Act method of biblical inquiry is transformation.”

### **The Methodology<sup>12</sup>**

Each step in the See-Judge-Act approach refers to a specific movement in the study of the Word. The facilitator can provide the participants with a series of key questions to aid the group in initiating its exegetical journey.

The first step, *See*, refers simply to examining the text. This movement is an invitation to read it closely, to listen and observe carefully the characters in the story, and to pay attention to their historical and social context(s).

*Key questions:* Who are the characters in this text? What is their context? Who do the characters find themselves in their present circumstances? What concerns and/or problems appear in the story? What emotions and feelings filter through the story? What do you think the author is trying to communicate with his or her community?

The second step, *Judge*, refers to spiritual discernment. This movement provides opportunities for participants to discern and analyze their own circumstances in light of the biblical text. It is an invitation to evaluate the conditions of our lives.

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<sup>10</sup> Scott McKnight, *The Blue Parakeet*, pp. 193-194.

<sup>11</sup> Scott McKnight, *The Blue Parakeet*, pp. 198.

<sup>12</sup> Aida Irizzary-Fernández “A Communal Reading” in Hee An Choi and Katheryn Pfisterer Darr (eds), *Engaging the Bible: critical readings from contemporary women*, p. 50-51.

*Key questions:* How does the text speak to us, to our community, today? What is the good news? What analysis of my community do I need to do in light of this Scripture? What is God's purpose for us in light of what we have heard? Do I need to make any changes in my behavior, in my perspectives, in my way of thinking, in my praying? Do we need to reconsider corporate decisions? Are we making a difference in the life of our church, our denomination, our community, and our world? What challenges do we hear from the text and amidst our dialogue with one another?

Finally, we arrive to the last step, *Act*, which refers to transformation. In this third movement, some level of spiritual, political, or social change is anticipated. We move from reflection into action. In this step, the text is re-read and reformulated in order to assist us in moving from assessment into commitment.

*Key questions:* What steps do I/we need to take in order to be responsive to the invitation we hear in the text? Who needs to be involved? How are we going to implement changes? How will change affect our community, our church, and our denomination? How can we make the world a better place for the human race? How are we building the Reign of God in our midst?

It may be important to remind participants of a simple, two-pronged ground rule: we need both an *open mind* and a *willing heart* in order to truly listen to the Spirit's voice in our midst. Whether the participant is a long-term church member or a newly formed church seeker, table fellowship becomes an opportunity to enter sacred ground together in a journey of faith.

### **Part 3: Religulous [2008]<sup>13</sup> and Group Discussion / Presentation**

1. What evidence is there for the existence of Christ (given that no one who wrote about him even met him)? [See Luke 1:1-4, Acts 1:1-19]
2. How can we believe in a talking snake, people living to 900 yrs of age and the virgin birth? [See Gen. 3:1-7, Genesis 9:28-29, Matt 1:18-25]
3. Why did Lot offer his daughters to be raped in order to protect the angels; and he was the good guy? [Gen. 19:1-14]
4. Are miracles not just mundane coincidences? [1 Kings 17:17-24, 2 Kings 4:1-7, 2 Kings 4:18-37, Matt 17:20, Acts 4:29-31, false prophets Matthew 24:24, 2 Thes 2:9, Revelation 13:13]
5. Did Jonah really live inside a big fish for 3 days (how)? [Jonah 1:17]
6. Are the Ten Commandments really the ten most important laws? Only two of them are real laws; don't steal and don't kill. Why not include torture, child abuse and rape? [Exodus 20:2-17 and Deuteronomy 5:6-21]
7. Do you think that, if when you were a kid, they transposed the Bible stories with fairy tales, that you would know the difference as an adult?
8. God is super-powerful, he can do anything, why doesn't he just obliterate the devil and therefore get rid of evil in the world? What is he waiting for?
9. Your God is jealous, that seems so un-godlike, I know people who have gotten over jealousy. (Can you justify his jealousy?) [Ex. 20:5, Deut. 5:9]
10. Does it ever bother you that the story of Jesus was floating around the Mediterranean area for at least 1000 years before him? Implied question – is the story of Jesus not just a compilation of other stories?
  - a. Krishna (India >1000 years BC) was a carpenter, born of a virgin and baptized in a river.
  - b. Mithra (Persian god ~600 BC) was born on Dec. 25, performed miracles, resurrected on the third day and was known as the: lamb, way, truth, light, savior and messiah.

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<sup>13</sup> Summary of questions compiled by Horizon College and Seminary at <http://horizoncs.blogspot.com/2009/02/top-10-religulous-questions.html>

- c. In 1280 BC, the Egyptian Book of the Dead describes a god, Horus, who was born to a virgin, baptized in a river by Anup the baptizer, who was later beheaded. He was tempted while alone in the desert, healed the sick, the blind and walked on water, raised Asar from the dead (translates into Lazarus), had 12 disciples. He was crucified first, after 3 days, two women announced that he had been resurrected.

## **Group Discussion / Presentation**

### **Concluding Remarks**

- It is ok to doubt. It is important to ask questions about our faith, even how basic it may seem. "Faith seeking Understanding" NOT "Blind Faith"!
- God never asked us to defend him nor his works. "Let God be God!"
- Apologetics is to clarify and communicate the Good News to others, and it is not to be used as a defense of your faith like your life depends on it.
- It is ok for us not to have an answer for everything about the Bible. The Bible is not an Answer Book, but a "Story Book".
- Critical Thinking (theological reflection) must be a constant process for every Christian in every generation. "Renewal of the Mind"
- Discernment comes through 1) our relationship with God/Jesus/Spirit, 2) humility before the WORD, 3) connecting with the world, and 4) self-understanding.
- It is more important to be right with God and the world than being right.
- Studying God's Word must lead to Transformation. "A Believing and Practicing Christian" NOT "A Sunday Christian"
- Remember the Jesus' Creed: 1) Love God, 2) Love Others.

### **Closing Prayer**

**Recommended Reading List:**

1. *The Blue Parakeet* by Scot McKnight (Highly Recommended)
2. *A Place for Truth* by Dallas Willard (Highly Recommended)
3. *The Reason for God* by Tim Keller (Highly Recommended)
4. *The Year of Living Biblically* by A. J. Jacobs (Highly Recommended)
5. *The Story We Find Ourselves In* by Brian D. McLaren (Highly Recommended)
6. *Surprised by Hope* by N. T. Wright (Highly Recommended)
7. *The Screwtapes Letters and Miracles* by C. S. Lewis (Highly Recommended)
8. *How to Read the Bible* by John Goldingay (Highly Recommended)
9. *The Evidence for Jesus* by James D. G. Dunn (Highly Recommended)
10. *Beyond the Bible* by I. Howard Marshall (Highly Recommended)
11. *Theological Foundations For Ministry* by Ray S. Anderson, ed. (Highly Recommended)
12. *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine* by Anthony C. Thiselton (Highly Recommended)
13. *Hermeneutics – An Introduction* by Anthony C. Thiselton
14. *Models for Interpretation of Scripture* by John Goldingay
15. *First Theology* by Kevin J. Vanhoozer
16. *Everyday Theology* by Kevin J. Vanhoozer
17. *Listening to the Spirit in the Text* by Gordon D. Fee
18. *Faith & Understanding* by Paul Helm
19. *The Problem with Evangelical Theology* by Ben Witherington III
20. *Atheist Delusions* by David Bentley Hart
21. *Introducing Theological Interpretation of the Scripture* by Daniel J. Treier
22. *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible* by Robert H. Stein
23. *Loving God with our Minds – the pastor as theologian* by Michael Welker & Cynthia A. Jarvis, eds.
24. *Whose Community? Which Interpretation?* by Merold Westphal
25. *The Story of Christianity, Volume 1 & 2* by Justo Gonzalez

**Web Resources:**

John Goldingay [http://documents.fuller.edu/sot/faculty/goldingay/cp\\_content/homepage/homepage.htm](http://documents.fuller.edu/sot/faculty/goldingay/cp_content/homepage/homepage.htm)

NT Wright <http://www.ntwrightpage.com/>

Oswald Chambers <http://utmost.org/> (devotional)

**Further Readings:**

Methodist's perspective on "Why does The United Methodist Church ordain women?"

<http://www.umc.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=lwL4KnN1LtH&b=4746355&ct=3169209>

## **Methodism**

### *History*

Methodism did not arise as a result of doctrinal dispute, but out of an emphasis on practical Christianity. "The underlying energy of the Wesleyan theological heritage stems from an emphasis upon practical divinity, the implementation of genuine Christianity in the lives of believers." [1](#)

The founder of the Methodist movement is John Wesley. Wesley was a minister of the [Church of England](#) who struggled with his own faith until having an evangelical experience of conversion at Aldersgate. John Wesley himself described the general perception of the newly-formed Methodist group:

The one charge then advanced against them was, that they were "righteous overmuch;" that they were abundantly too scrupulous, and too strict, carrying things to great extremes: In particular, that they laid too much stress upon the Rubrics and Canons of the Church; that they insisted too much on observing the Statutes of the University; and that they took the Scriptures in too strict and literal a sense; so that if they were right, few indeed would be saved. [2](#)

### *Distinctive Beliefs*

Wesleyan Emphases - prevenient grace, justifying grace, sanctifying grace

"Sanctifying grace draws us toward the gift of Christian perfection, which Wesley described as a heart 'habitually filled with the love of God and neighbor" and as "having the mind of Christ and walking as he walked.""

For more info on United Methodist Beliefs and Doctrines:

<http://archives.umc.org/interior.asp?mid=519>

Methodist Church in Singapore:

[http://www.methodist.org.sg/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=165&Itemid=225](http://www.methodist.org.sg/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=165&Itemid=225)

## **Presbyterianism**

Presbyterian beliefs are rooted in the thought of the French reformer John Calvin. In addition to the common Reformation themes of justification by faith, the priesthood of all believers, and the importance of the Bible, Presbyterianism also reflects Calvin's distinctive emphasis on the sovereignty of God and a representational form of church government.

The PC(USA) summarizes **Presbyterian beliefs** this way:

God is the supreme authority throughout the universe. Our knowledge of God and God's purpose for humanity comes from the Bible, particularly what is revealed in the New Testament through the life of Jesus Christ. Our salvation (justification) through Jesus is God's generous gift to us and not the result of our own accomplishments. It is everyone's job - ministers and lay people alike - to share this Good News with the whole world. That is also why the Presbyterian Church is governed at all levels by a combination of clergy and laity, men and women alike.