

T&T Clark Companion to Methodism

Charles Yrigoyen, Jr., ed. *T&T Clark Companion to Methodism*. London: T&T Clark, 2010. 602 pp. \$150.00. Hardcover. ISBN: 9780567032935.

begun as a “Holy Club” with Christ College, Oxford, in eighteenth-century England, other students jeered John and Charles Wesley’s attempts to systematize the Christian life by calling them “Methodists.” The name stuck and ever since “Methodism” has come to encompass a range of denominations and movements in every corner of the globe. The World Methodist Council estimates there to be seventy-five million people around the world who consider themselves to be Methodists and many more who have been influenced by the ideas and practices expressed in Methodism.

The *T&T Clark Companion to Methodism* is a first-class resource edited by Charles Yrigoyen, Jr., former General Secretary of the United Methodist Church’s General Commission on Archives & History. The contributors include many significant scholars of the Wesleyan and Methodist movements. The *T&T Clark Companion* series is intended to provide an overview of key research fields in biblical studies and theology for postgraduate students, scholars, and libraries. The *Companion to Methodism* is organized into three sections. Part I includes twenty-one essays on a variety of topics related both to John and Charles Wesley as well as the Methodist movement. Part II, “Methodism A-Z,” includes brief articles on Methodist concepts, personalities, groups, and areas. Part III is a topically arranged but unannotated bibliography.

The variety of essays, articles, and bibliography are clearly aimed towards those already introduced to Methodism but looking to explore further into any number of research areas. A common element to the longer essays is the sense of reading the first and last chapters of a dissertation as the author reviews the current state of research and suggests areas or strategies for further research. The essays, in turn, are supported by the Methodist glossary and biography in the second section as well as the bibliography in the third section. By the editor’s own admission, the *Companion* does not attempt to be an introductory textbook but rather a contribution to the scholarship about Methodism.

The target audience for this volume, as well as other *T&T Clark Companions*, is the student or researcher faced with a research assignment. The essays help to orient one to the scholarship in a broad area. For example, Chilcote’s essay on “Evangelism in the Methodist Tradition” provides an overview of distinctively Methodist emphases in evangelism, a description of how theology, emphasis, and methods of evangelism have changed over time, and a narrative about current and future trends in the practice and research of evangelism. Further biographical information about persons involved in the practice or research of evangelism can be found in the dictionary section, with extended bibliographical references in the concluding bibliography. The *Companion* provides a nice one-volume package for assisting the researcher in this way.

Topically, the essays span widely, from theology and hymnody to the spread of Methodism in different regions of the world to topics like spirituality and social ethics. The first four essays feature the Wesleys, with essays on the history of the Wesleys, the theology of the Wesleys, the hymnody of the Wesleys, and on the “Wesleyan quadrilateral.”

The next seven essays consider Methodism at “home” in the United Kingdom and Ireland and “abroad” through missions to North America, Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Northern and Continental Europe, Russia and the Baltics, and Latin America. The next seven essays consider different aspects of Methodism as lived through the church, with essays on evangelism, worship, sacraments, spirituality, social ethics, policy, and ecumenism. The final two essays focus on the images of Methodism and the archival research collections of Methodism. While these fairly broad essays cover a lot of ground, there are a few puzzling omissions. The volume lacks essays on other historic emphases and contributions of Methodists: Christian education (class meetings and Sunday school), women in ministry (the deaconess movement and ordination), and publishing.

The middle section, entitled “Methodism A to Z,” serves as the dictionary of the *Companion* with entries on topics and persons within Methodism. The entries are rarely over a page and provide a useful and succinct summary of that topic or person along with a brief bibliography. Unfortunately, the brief bibliography makes extensive use of abbreviated titles which are only revealed in the beginning pages. While likely trying to achieve some space savings within the 600-page volume, it makes these dictionary entries more difficult to navigate. This especially stands out as the other sections generally include unabbreviated bibliographic references.

The final section is an arranged bibliography of Methodism. The briefest of the three sections (just seventeen pages), the bibliography is arranged by General Reference Works; General Histories (with regional subtopics); Topical Studies (Evangelism, Holiness, Missions, Social Reform, and Sunday School); Theology and Doctrine; Worship, the Sacrament, and Hymnody; Church Organization; and Representative Journals. While the bibliography includes some modern editions of primary sources, the focus is upon secondary source material and more recent scholarship.

While there are other sources for essays, dictionary entries, and bibliographies about Methodism, the *T&T Clark Companion to Methodism* puts a selection of all three in one handy volume. This focused niche is also limiting. There are other collections of essays on Methodism (such as the articles found in *Methodist History* or *Methodist Review*), other dictionaries of Methodism (such as the *Encyclopedia of World Methodism* or the *Historical Dictionary of Methodism*), and other significant bibliographies of Methodism (such as the *United Methodist Studies: Basic Bibliographies*). I would heartily recommend the *Companion* for someone searching for a topic or the basic state of research within Methodism. The book belongs on the shelf of any theological library that serves Methodist students or researchers. While not an introductory or reference text, the *T&T Clark Companion to Methodism* works as advertised as a “companion” for the curious researchers that will help lead them further into their research.

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