

Wesley



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John Wesley is one of the most enigmatic religious figures in the eighteenth century, this "Guide for the Perplexed" will identify some of the key factors contributing to this perplexity and aid students in their understanding. Arguably the most significant religious figure in eighteenth century England, John Wesley presents a variety of challenges for students. As anyone familiar with both the stereotypes and the scholarship related to Wesley knows, tricky interpretive questions abound. Was Wesley a conservative, high church Tory or a revolutionary proto-democrat or even proto-Marxist politically? Was Wesley a modern rationalist obsessed with the epistemology of religious belief or a late medieval style thinker who believed in demonic possession and supernatural healing? Was Wesley primarily a pragmatic evangelist or a serious theologian committed to the long-haul work of catechesis, initiation, and formation? Was Wesley most deeply formed by Eastern Orthodoxy, German Pietism, or his own native Anglicanism? Finally, was a particular conception of the relationship between faith and works or a robust Trinitarian view of the Christian

life the orienting concern of Wesley's theological vision? Despite more than two centuries of scholarly reflection on Wesley's life and work, leading historians still agree on one thing: John Wesley is an elusive, enigmatic figure. Fortunately, recent developments in the study of the long eighteenth century have shed new light on many aspects of Wesley's life and work.

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