By this, I don’t mean giving it marks out of 20, or deciding that *Tangle of Torment* (1983) is ‘inferior’ to *Middlemarch* (1872). Down that slope lies cultural eugenics, whereas the real task is to see that these novels are part of our literature – they belong, that is, inside our written worlds. *All* these – Chaucer, Shakespeare, Ginsberg and the rest – are ‘fantasies’ in the broad sense of existing in our minds, desires and speculations, rather than among the solidities of daily life. The difference is that romance novels are likely to be set deeper in the territory of wish – but then, they have the frequent grace of recognising their own uncertainty: ‘He loves me (not)

So we shouldn’t allow ourselves to be scared by cries of ‘fantasy’ or ‘conventional’, ‘clichéd’, etc. All literature is all three of those, otherwise it could hardly come into being. Best to treat the romance-novel conventions (the first-sight, the happy ending, and so on) as we treat rhyme: a means of foretelling that future towards which the pattern of the dance is drawing us. And the richer the pattern, the more satisfying its execution and completion.

But this brings me to a second difference I have with the present discussion. Page 5 of *From Australia with Love* (the Dedication) defines ‘romance’ as ‘the great adventure of seeking and finding a life partner one loves and trusts’. Maybe, but actually, from the seventh word onwards, to my ears that sounds like marriage. The *finding* of a life partner may, I romantically suppose, be the culmination of romance, but if it is, then it is also, therein, its laying to rest. Having found the One one loves and trusts (to put out the bins, mention the overdraft, pick up the kids, and so on), the doubtfulness at the heart of romance, its ‘not’ in brackets, can be explored elsewhere, in such things as ordinary life, or (no less certain, no less meaningfully in brackets) death.

It is characteristic of this principled, thorough and witty book that it brings us to look in such deeper directions too.

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In the opening paragraphs of *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*, David Hempton lists some attention-grabbing statistics. By the beginning of the twentieth century Methodism had grown from its first few followers in the 1730s to a membership of around nine million. It had gained at least 35 million adherents and had spread across six continents. By the mid-nineteenth century
Methodism had become the largest Protestant denomination in America and had given rise to the world’s most dynamic missionary movement. The numerical growth and geographical expansion of the movement during this period was spectacular but, as Hempton points out, strangely under-researched. While detailed local studies of Methodism have proliferated over the last decade, there are virtually no works that explore the international expansion of the movement. This book provides a long-overdue study of the rise of Methodism as a world movement, as well as its relative decline in later years.

Any modern historian who writes about Methodism does so within the long shadow cast by E. P. Thompson’s memorable portrayal of Methodism as a perversion of political and sexual urges in *The Making of the English Working Class.* Hempton is no exception and he pays respectful tribute to Thompson while disagreeing with his conclusions. In particular, Hempton applauds Thompson’s attention to the question of ‘what Methodism was’. Hempton’s previous works have attempted to get to the heart of the Methodist experience through a variety of techniques, including literary, biographical and legal approaches. The comparative approach taken in this book continues this valuable focus on Methodist experience.

The book begins by emphasising the tensions that both plagued and energised Methodism:

> It was a movement of discipline and sobriety, but also of ecstasy and enthusiasm. It was a voluntary association of free people, but also specialized in rules, regulations, and books of discipline. It railed against riches, but became inexorably associated with the steady accumulation of wealth. It once prided itself on its appeal to the unlearned, but then founded educational institutions with unparalleled fecundity (p. 7).

It is primarily around a thematic exploration of such tensions, rather than through a chronological or geographical narrative, that the book is organised. The chapters explore the rise of Methodism through themes such as ‘Competition and Symbiosis’, ‘Enlightenment and Enthusiasm’, ‘Money and Power’, ‘The Medium and the Message’ and ‘Boundaries and Margins’. This thematic approach makes for much more detailed and interesting analysis than would be possible within a narrative account, but it does assume that the reader has a reasonable knowledge of Methodist history. This is not an introductory work.

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Each chapter contains a stand-alone argument about one aspect of the international expansion of Methodism. The analysis of these chapters is dense and thought-provoking – for the aspiring Methodist scholar, there is a postdoctoral project on every page. Hempton often relies on local studies produced by other scholars, but the result is much more than synthesis. To give just one example, in the opening chapter on ‘Competition and Symbiosis’, Hempton argues that Methodism survived and flourished in a context of fierce competition with a myriad of other religious and cultural ‘species’. To examine this survival and growth, Hempton analyses Methodist expansion within a number of different contexts. He compares the success of Methodism among Republican manufacturers in nineteenth-century America, the explosive growth of black American Methodist congregations, revivals among mining communities in Cornwall, and the sudden growth experienced by the Irish Methodist church at the end of the nineteenth century. He argues that in each of these cases Methodism developed a symbiotic relationship with the ‘host culture’ – aspects of Republican, black American, Cornish and Irish culture made these communities particularly receptive to Methodism. The connection between Methodism and these cultures was significant for the growth of the movement. Methodism grew with populations that grew, and travelled with those that travelled. Hempton is at pains to avoid a simplistic argument and points out that Methodism at times flourished where such obvious symbiosis did not occur. The model does have, however, real explanatory power for the pattern of Methodist growth across the world. It provides a fruitful starting-point for further study of these patterns.

From the outset, Hempton expresses his interest in the experience of ‘ordinary’ Methodists, particularly given the movement’s almost total reliance on voluntary contributions and participation. In this regard, he emphasises that Methodism ‘was predominantly a women’s movement’ (p. 5). The experience of Methodist women is explored most directly in the chapter on ‘Boundaries and Margins’. Hempton calls for historians to move beyond the traditional focus on male Methodist leaders, and the more recent interest in those few Methodist women who became public leaders or preachers, to a broader analysis of the ways the majority presence of women shaped the movement as a whole. Such analysis, Hempton argues, requires historians to understand the experience of these women ‘on something like its own terms’ rather than simply interpreting it within preconceived political, social or gender categories (p. 149). Some interesting examples demonstrate how such analysis could proceed. Hempton’s treatment of these issues – and many others in the book - is stimulating and convincing, but frustratingly brief. Given the scope of the book and the complexity of the questions Hempton raises, the book could profitably have been twice as long.
From the perspective of the historian, the great strength of this book is that Hempton’s analysis of the Methodist experience is consistently contextualised within the broader history of this period. Methodism shaped and was shaped by the wider environment of empire-building, trade, urbanisation and secularisation in which it grew. Where many Methodist scholars have examined Methodist theology and practice as though they developed in a vacuum, Hempton takes historical developments and their influence on Methodism seriously. This book challenges religious historians to recognise the need to analyse Methodism within this wider context. It challenges ‘secular’ social and cultural historians to recognise the significance of the Methodist movement within world history. Hopefully these challenges will be accepted.

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Professor Anastasios Tamis, the Director of the National Centre for Hellenic Studies at La Trobe University, has written a good introductory book to the political, economic and cultural history of Australia’s Greek community. This is no easy task.

The Greeks in Australia provides a good overview for the student and non-academic of the history of the Australian Greek community. It is concise and easy to read, except for the erratic structure of some of its chapters. The photos are well selected and give the book lustre.

The strength of the book is the information on the origins of the Greek presence, which is thorough and interesting, and the coverage of the intra-Greek divisions. Tamis’ knowledge of the origins and growth of the Greek presence in Australia is second to none. The intra-Greek divisions have at its core the actions of the Greek Orthodox Church. The pre-World War II Greek communities were independent entities and controlled the establishment of churches, schools and other community needs. This changed in the early 1960s when the church tried to institutionalise itself as the only recognised power to establish churches through canonical laws. This caused a schism between the old Greek communities on the one side and the church and the post-World War II communities on the other. The former was multi-cultural and Orthodox-centric, while the latter was strongly Helleno-centric, to the extent that its leaders, including the Archbishop, strongly supported the fascist