

Wesley did not die with him. It survived his death. What is much more wonderful, it survived all the ecclesiastical quarrels which broke out amongst his followers after his death. A hundred temporary blunders in policy have not destroyed it. It has persisted in spite of half-a-dozen disruptions. It has run through a whole century since without rest or failure. It burns on with unquenched flame under all skies.

Methodism, it may be claimed, when set in the light of history, satisfies Newman's famous seven tests of the reality of a Church—preservation of type, continuity of principle, power of assimilation, logical sequence, anticipation of the future, conservative action on the past, and—most triumphant of all—undying vitality.

No one can realise the wonder of this sustained energy of life who does not remember how broken, how acrid with ecclesiastical quarrels, has been—through wide spaces, at least—the history of Methodism since its founder died. On all the analogies of history Methodism, when Wesley died, might have been expected to break up into quarrelling fragments, and to have expired in a tangle of schisms. The quarrels came fast and thick. There was one division within seven years of Wesley's death; three in the first twenty-five years after his death; and a fourth a little later, the most tragical of all. The quarrels of 1847-50 cost the parent Church, in five sad years, more members than Wesley gained in fifty years. And the divisions of Methodism, speaking generally, have had less justification in reason than any other to be found in the history of Christ's Church. Not one of them represents a protest against doctrinal error, or a struggle for spiritual freedom.

The best way of realising how unnecessary were the divisions of Methodism, how microscopic the questions which gave birth to them, is to consider the aspect they wear to outsiders. Any respectable encyclopædia which tries to express in plain English what is the exact difference betwixt a Wesleyan Methodist, a Primitive Methodist, a Bible Christian, or a United Free Methodist, &c., finds itself simply bankrupt. One of the best English encyclopædias, for example, after an anxious study of the history and characteristics of the Bible Christian Church, says