

they hold fast and hold forth the word of life, and contend for the faith once delivered to the saints; but we complain that they do not *together* hold fast and *together* hold forth and contend *together* for the faith once delivered to the saints. Instead of this, alas, they strive and dispute among themselves, ignore each others services, endeavor to neutralize each others efforts, and in fact excommunicate one another.

We do not complain of the existance of sects in the bosom of the church. We do not see how this is to be avoided. So long as we are allowed to think, or to exercise our private judgments, which as Protestants we claim as at once our right and our duty, we must expect diversity of sentiment on minor points, which again must be expressed by the establishment and existence of sects. We cannot help taking different views on certain questions, and cannot avoid ranging ourselves according to the views we are led to adopt. It is quite Utopian to expect, that the period will ever arrive, when there will not be divisions into sects.

Nor do we think this an unmitigated evil. We could demonstrate we imagine, that good has arisen from it. We owe to this the vigilance which has been exercised over the oracles of truth, and the purity with which they have been handed down to us. The doctrines of revelation have been more thoroughly sifted, and truth ultimately settled on a firmer basis. Besides, who does not see, that the unanimity of the church may be more strikingly manifested, and present a more persuasive spectacle to the world, when it exists along with minor diversities, than under a smoothly shaven system of uniformity. In the latter case there might be a danger of ecclesiastical despotism, which could not fail to excite the jealousy of the world; in the former there would be the working of a powerful common principle, making it manifest that the religion which produced such benignant harmony, amid such diversity, must be of God and not of man.

But if it is vain, and in many points of view undesirable, ever to think of securing union in the church by the reduction of sects into one vast body, bearing only the name of Christ; if it is vain to hope to amalgamate all denominations into one, it is *not vain* to seek after visible unanimity among the several sections of the church, holding those fundamental doctrines which are mentioned as emphatically the truth of God. Within the provinces of that now mighty state of which the kingdom which is not of this world is composed, there is room for endless variety of administration, and for local laws and customs, widely differing from each other, without at all destroying its visible unity. Why should the various provinces present the aspect of independent states, although their local laws and customs cannot be dispensed with. It may be impossible for the citizens of the spiritual Israel to overlook their *tribal distinctions*, but why should those paltry distinctions make them forget their common relation or sever those ties which bind them together as inhabitants of the same country to whom alike pertain the promises. Why should Judah vex Ephraim, or Ephraim envy Judah. Why should it be reckoned of more importance to belong to the tribe of Ephraim or Judah, than to be a member of the great Hebrew commonwealth; and why may not the members of the christian church, perfect, so far