

garding it completed. That will not be, I believe, before the day of doom. Certainly it will not be in our day, for never was Biblical research more actively pushed forward in all directions than just now. Never, therefore, were the Churches more bound, while conscientiously guarding old and assured truths, to beware of dogmatism as to new views, or of trammelling unnecessarily the advancing research. The free action of spiritual life in the form of investigation and criticism when displayed in fields hitherto little trodden, and in questions hitherto little studied by us, may apparently produce, or really produce, for a time, only contradictory and destructive theories,—yet in God's good time it will assuredly bring about unity and peace, and minister to faith and virtue, as it has done in fields already traversed and as to questions now settled

It is thought by some that Christian unity—unity of spirit—also tends to ritualistic uniformity or uniformity of worship. There are two grounds on either or both of which this opinion may be maintained. It may be argued that there is a divinely appointed form of worship defined in the New Testament with sufficient distinctness, and that Christian men will sooner or later be all convinced of this, and will, of course, adopt that form of worship. It may also be argued that there is an absolutely best form of worship, and that when the spiritual life of the Church is sufficiently deepened and quickened it must assume that form as alone fully appropriate. And these two arguments may be combined; indeed, if there is a divinely-appointed form of worship it can scarcely be other than the absolutely best form of worship—the one most suitable in all lands, ages, and circumstances.

I have neither the time nor the desire to examine these arguments, but certainly I am unconvinced by either of them. I cannot see that there is one form of worship exclusively prescribed by Scripture and binding in all its regulations on men in all places and at all times; or that there is

ne absolutely best form of worship, identical and unvarying for all men, no matter what may have been the history, or what may be the characters or circumstances, of the worshippers. Hence, although I can hardly doubt that the more enlightened and earnest our piety becomes, the less value will it attach to accessories and imposing forms, the more suspicious will it grow of what is symbolical and artificial, and the higher will be its appreciation of those forms of worship which with the greatest simplicity, naturalness, and directness, bring the soul into contact with the realities of worship, I can feel no certainty that there would be uniformity of worship even if there were perfect unity of spirit; and I will judge no man's worship by my own ideal of its form. To his own master each man standeth or falleth. The unity of worship, which is all important, is not in its form at all, but in its being in spirit and in truth. The form is entirely subordinate to the spirit. The true spirit is restricted to no one form, for the Holy Ghost has condescended to bless and to act through the most diverse forms. Therefore, let us not rashly pronounce any of them common or unclean.

Ritualistic uniformity, then, is not only not to be identified with Christian unity, but probably not even to be included in the idea of Christian unity. The same must be said of oneness of ecclesiastical government or polity. Yet nothing can be more manifest than that, within certain limits and conditions, Christian unity must work very powerfully towards ecclesiastical oneness—towards the union of Churches. The main reason why not a few Churches stand apart is unhappily to be sought and found not in their principles, but in their passions. Jealousies, rivalries, recriminations, assaults upon one another—most unseemly and improper in themselves, and most injurious to the Christian cause—are exhibited, instead of Christian graces or practices. The strength and energy which should have been applied to the conversion and sanctification of the world are far more than wasted in warring with one an-