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Poetry.

The Praise-Meeting of the Flowers.

The flowers of many climates
That bloom all seasons through,
Met in a stately garden
Bright with the morning dew.

For praise and loving worship
The Lord they came to meet;
Her box of precious ointment
The rose brake at His feet.

The passion-flower His symbols
Wore fondly on her breast;
She spoke of self-denial
As what might please Him best.

The morning-glories fragile,
Like infants soon to go,
Had dainty toy-like trumpets,
And praised the Master so.

"His word is like to honey,"
The clover testified,
"And all who trust thy promise
Shall in thy love abide."

The lilies said: "O! trust Him!
We neither toil nor spin,
And yet His house of beauty
See how we enter in."

The king-cup and her kindred
Said: "Let us all be glad!
Of his redundant sunshine
Behold how we are clad!"

"And let us follow Jesus!"
The star-of-Bethlehem said;
And all the band of star-flowers
Bent down with reverent head.

The glad sunflower answered,
And little daisies bright,
And all the cousin asters:
"We follow towards the light!"

We praise Him for the mountains!"
The Alpine roses cried;
"We bless him for the valleys!"
The violets replied.

"We praise Him," said the air-plants,
"For breath we never lack!"
"And for the rocks we praise Him!"
The lichens answered back.

"We praise God for the waters!"
The salt sea-mosses sighed;
And all His baptized lilies
"Amen! amen!" replied.

"And for the cool green woodlands,
We praise and thanks return,"
Said kalmias and azaleas
And gracefully feathery fern.

"And for the wealth of gardens,
And all the gardener thinks!"
Said roses and camelias,
And all the sweet-breathed pinks.

"Hosannah in the highest!"
The baby bluets sang;
And little trembling harebells
With softest music rang.

"The winter hath been bitter,
But sunshine follows storm;
Thanks for His loving-kindness,
The earth's great heart is warm!"

So said the pilgrim's mayflower
That cometh after snow:
The humblest and the sweetest
Of all the flowers that blow.

"Thank God for every weather,
The sunshine and the wet!"
Spoke out the cheery pansies
And darling mignonette.

And then the sun descended,
The heavens were all aglow;
The little morning-glories
Had faded hours ago.

And now the bright day-lilies
Their love-watch ceased to keep:
"He giveth," said the poppies,
"To his beloved, sleep."

The gray of evening deepened,
The soft wind stirred the corn;
When sudden in the garden
Another flower was born!

It was the evening primrose,
Her sisters followed fast:
With perfumed lips they whispered:
"Thank God for night at last!"

—Salem Register.

Rev. Joseph Cook announces that his fall course of lectures in Boston will be devoted to the influence of German theology on New England.

Religious.

HALIFAX, August 11th, 1877.

Dear Mr. Editor,—

The subject of "Christian Union" having for some years past been, more or less constantly brought before the public, I thought the readers of the *Messenger* would like to see a sermon preached by Dr. Armitage of New York, on that subject, and would kindly solicit a place for the same in the pages of the *Messenger*, as soon as convenient.

I am yours, &c., &c.,

EDWIN CLAY.

Christian Union: Real and Unreal.

BY REV. T. ARMITAGE, D. D.

An address by Rev. T. Armitage, delivered at a meeting held in the Dutch Reformed church, Fifth Avenue, New York, to promote the objects of the Christian Union enterprise. The various denominations were represented by Dr. Smith, Episcopal; Dr. Rice, Presbyterian; Dr. Vermilye, Reformed Dutch; Dr. Armitage, Baptist.

I appear before my brethren of various Christian denominations this evening with great reluctance and even shrinking, to discuss the subject of Christian Union. And this, not because I do not love unity among Christ's disciples—for the intense earnestness with which the Redeemer prayed for oneness among his people were enough to hallow the theme to every feeling heart,—but I shrink because of what seems to me the amazing misconceptions of good men as to its real nature, as to the supposed obstructions in the ways of its attainment, and as to the true method of promoting it.

Besides this, the fruitlessness and ill-feeling that have followed most of the attempts to promote union upon the current basis, seem to forbid future attempts in the same direction as useless, if not worse than useless. Then what is to be done? Are we to settle down into the conviction that the Saviour's prayer is a nullity—that real Christian union is unattainable? I am frank to say that my own conviction is fixed and settled that the Redeemer's prayer remains unanswered, and that real Christian unity must be unattainable, until the great mass of Christ's followers do radically change their views of the nature of Christian union itself, and bend their energies in an entirely different direction in order to secure it.

I would not venture to trouble you with my views on this matter, if your Secretary had not pressed me to do so till I am tired of saying "no;" nor even then, but for the assurance that you desired a frank and manly avowal of sentiment here, and that I am perfectly at liberty as a Baptist to say what I think necessary, and that no offense is to be given or taken in the discussion. Assuming, then, the sincerity of this assurance, I will proceed, first of all, to examine the popular conception of Christian union.

I. As far as I can discover, my Pedobaptist brethren seem to think that it consists very largely in a warm-hearted, loving feeling toward each other as regenerated men.

The general tone of newspaper articles and platform speeches would lead one to suppose that a new gift of tongues had been bestowed upon the churches, so eloquently do good men descend upon the progress of Christian union. But when you come to inquire as to what they mean, you find that the upshot of it all is, that Christians of various denominations are either acting together now on some subject on which they never differed before, or else they are meeting together in one place to worship, while their meeting is openly organized upon the avowed basis that on all other subjects but those then and there contemplated, they are so positively disunited as to compel the disruption of their concord if one subject of their tenacious differences should happen to be broached. And this is called Christian union! Out of that particular body or assembly their dis-

agreements are earnest, radical, and unalterable. But there they "agree to disagree;" and so disagreement, if you can agree about it, is unity! That is, kneeling on the same floor, sitting on the same seat, singing the same hymn, uniting in the same prayer (when you have never been divided at all as to the floor, the bench, the hymn, or the prayer), and being as different as possible in all other respects, constitutes Christian union! Men of every hue of faith and opinion, and every variety of practice, too, happen to meet in one Board, on one platform, or under one roof, and because they are not bitter, but feel kindly toward each other, they consider they are making great attainments in the mysteries of Christian union. Yet not a point of difference is yielded in any respect; each man would suffer and die for his distinctive principles, as his fathers suffered and died for them; and each would distrust the other's honesty, if he were not willing to die for them; and this is looked upon very generally, as good, fair, Bible Christian union! Well, it may be; but if it is, things have changed vastly since apostolic times. The truth is, that kindly feeling is not Christian union, and may exist where "the unity of the faith" is rent into a thousand shreds.

Why, indeed, to love one another as brethren, so far as that we can meet together and keep the peace for a short time, like gentlemen, without the intervention of a constable, or even of unlovely feeling, is at the best a very low Christian attainment. We worship with publicans every time that we frequent God's house, but we don't think much of that as a bond of union with them. Jesus says that a publican loves a publican, and the first duty of a Christian is to love his enemy and persecutor—so that a Christian has made no wonderful attainment, I think, when he comes to love his brother, and to worship with him in decency under one roof. But to claim that love as real Christian union—to assume it as answering the prayer of Christ for the same oneness that subsists between himself and the Father—is simply preposterous. I can love any man of any Christian church well enough to worship with him, at any time that it may be convenient for us both. I can love him enough to tender him, if a minister, the use of my pulpit, or to accept the use of his—but what does that amount to in the great matter of gospel oneness? I should certainly go out of his pulpit as stern and incorrigible a Baptist as when I entered it, and if he sacrificed his convictions simply on the ground of the interchange, I should much prefer not to exchange with him a second time. This is not Christian union, however popular and desirable it may be. It may be a certain result of Christian love, but Christian love is not Christian union. Unity can not exist with out love, but love may exist where there is no real and serious discord of opinion and faith. Kindly Christian feeling is not Christian union.

II. Popular opinion seems to make Christian union consist in a common communion of all sects at the Lord's Table as one consolidated mass of believers, and holds that the troublesome "close communion Baptists" are responsible for all the discords among Christians.

The popular cry among our Pedobaptist brethren is for pulling down of the middle wall of partition, and they persistently hold that these strict Baptists are the chief master-builders that strengthen it. Rev. John Chambers, of Philadelphia, says: "The world cannot be converted until the church is united, and the church cannot be united until Baptists renounce close communion." This reminds me of the fact that Roger Williams, and other early American Baptists, were excluded from the Pedobaptist churches of New England, not because they were bigots on the communion question, but because they would not embrace the doctrine of "Infant Baptism," so-called. Of course, they were obliged to form a

communion of their own, for they could in no wise be allowed to approach the Lord's table in the Pedobaptist churches till they renounced their heresy. But because they did so, and the heresy grew, instead of dying, their communion is now denounced as "close," and their children are exhorted by Mr. Chambers to "renounce" that also, on the serious charge of bigotry, and of standing in the way of the world's conversion. This is something like the two old Baptist deacons who had fallen into a luckless quarrel. When they began to relent, one said to the other: "Brother, this is all wrong, we ought to be reconciled. Therefore, I do insist upon it that you shall be reconciled, for I cannot be." Now, there is no more prominent public pleader for Christian union in the land than Mr. Chambers, and I assure you my Presbyterian brethren, that when I read his way of promoting it, I really envied you the possession of so extraordinary a man; for I thought that if Bro. Chambers had happened to have been on my side of the house, he would have made just one of the coolest Baptists that ever writhed before the whipping-post in Massachusetts Bay. But this brother is only a type of a very large class. On a Fourth of July, several years ago, individual members of all the Christian sects met in the largest hall in Philadelphia, to celebrate our National Independence by holding a union religious service. At that meeting, one of the most prominent speakers, who had shortly before published a pamphlet on Christian unity, in which he declared the Baptists to be the greatest bigots in Christendom, said: "I hope, sir, the time will come when all Christians, of every name and denomination, will sit down together at the Communion table; this is the spirit we want, it is the spirit of union." Immense applause followed this utterance, and a telegraphic whisper flashed through the throng: "That's a capital hit at the Baptists." Now, mind you, brethren, all this took place at a union meeting! And to be frank with you, we Baptists have an idea that we are rather commonly lampooned in that way at union meetings, by very loving brethren, so that we get a fancy, somehow, that we are a sect very much in the way of some very excellent men. So much on that head.

"Well, then, as to this matter of destroying 'close communion,' as a barrier to Christian union, I have this to say:

III. That communion at the Lord's table is not at all, in any proper sense, a test of Christian union.

Our Saviour did not intend it to be a test of Christian union, so far as we find anything on the subject in the Bible. No Christian denomination so holds it, so far as they set forth their views upon the matter in their best expositors or authorized standards. It is never so used in their Articles of Faith, catechisms, or creeds. Intelligent and honest men never so use it in defining the import of the supper. All Pedobaptists, when in controversy with Romanists, put a different interpretation from this upon the design of the Lord's supper, but when it becomes desirable to dress down the Baptists, by stigmatizing them as "exclusive," and "bigots," they call the supper a test of union. Is this honorable among gentlemen, to say nothing of Christians and ambassadors of Christ? Why give an interpretation to the Lord's supper, when an appeal can be based upon the ignorance or prejudices of men, to the injury of Baptists, which is never put upon it under any other circumstance? The fact is, the Bible defines the object of the supper to be specific. It was instituted for one thing, and for one thing only. What was that? To "show forth" your love for one another? Did Christ say that? No, sirs. To "show forth" Christ himself, as the Son of God—born in the manger—healing in the Temple—agonizing in the Garden?—No, sirs; not even that. To "show forth" Christ, truly, but only in one act of his mediation, as Paul ex-

presses it: "To show forth his death." This, and only this. No more no less. And our Pedobaptist brethren never give it any other interpretation, except when, in an unhappy moment, they stand behind the cross of Christ to make their Baptist brethren appear unmitigated bigots. Is not this true? I appeal to my candid and honorable brethren of various denominations now present to say if this is not true.

Now, then, take another view of the matter. Take the facts of the last supper as Jesus himself administered it. Let me ask you, did John show his Christian union with Judas Iscariot when they took the sop together from the same divine hand? Certainly, if ever, that should have been the time. Did the male portion of the discipleship show their Christian unity with the mother of Jesus, and with his other female followers, when they celebrated the supper alone? Did Jesus intend that they should? But if the supper is a mark of Christian union, why were those holy women not present to celebrate it, seeing that the discipleship was emphatically one? Our Lord's prayer for union was offered after the supper was administered. Therefore he prayed for a oneness among his disciples that the supper did not, and could not, supply. The fact is, that the Lord's supper is practically made of more importance in these days than other institutions of our Lord. Our Lord evidently intended that in gospel churches the Lord's supper should be of no more importance than the Lord's baptism. If one is a naked form, the other is a naked form; if one is a saving vitality, the other is a saving vitality; if one is a means of divine grace, the other is a means of divine grace; and if one is but a symbolical act, the other is but a symbolical act. If one is a putting on of Christ, the other is a showing forth of his death when he is put on. Then what end for the truth, or the glory of God, can be secured by the foisting in of some mystical sense in the interpretation of the one, which you exclude from the other? Why do you treat the one as if it were of the most solemn import imaginable, and the other as if it were the emptiest form possible? Both of them are Christ's ordinances, enjoined upon his people; they are equally hallowed and binding, and neither of them is intended as a test of Christian union. And it seems to me that our Pedobaptist brethren are well satisfied themselves. Hence, none of them are really open communion. When it is convenient, they extol Robert Hall's liberality, but do they practice it? Do they even endorse his principles? Certainly they do not. He did not believe that baptism is essential to the Lord's supper at all, but they do; hence the only really open communion churches that I know of are certain of the English Baptists, and the American Freewill Baptists. They do not believe a man needs to be baptized at all in order to commune at the Lord's table. I know of no Pedobaptist church that believes this, or that will admit its own converts, regenerated men to its table, until in the judgment of that church they are baptized. We Baptists take the same position with yourselves on this point. There is not a hair's breadth of difference between us here. We all hold that no man has a right to the supper till he is baptized. But, then, we hold that you are not baptized with gospel baptism, and of course the question between you and us becomes one, not of "close communion," but of "close" baptism. We ask to be fairly met on that question, and not on a false issue. Now, brethren, I wish you, in all candor, to look calmly upon the proposition which you submit to us Baptists. You ask us, while entertaining these views, to commune with those who have not been immersed on a profession of faith in Christ: that is, you ask us to commune with those we hold to be unbaptized. Yet you would subject to discipline any one of your own ministers or churches that assumed to act on this principle by publicly inviting to