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PLENTY OF TIME.

Plenty of time—plenty of time!

O what a foolish and treacherous chime!
With so much to see, and so much to be taught,
And the battle with evil each day to be fought;
With wonders above us, beneath, and around,
Which sages are seeking to mark and expound;
With work to be done in our fast passing prime,
Can ever there be for us "plenty of time?"

Our schools at most last a few score of years,
Spent in sunshine and shadow, in smiles or in tears;

While none are quite equal, how'er they be
classed,

And judgments to often are faultily passed.

'Twixt eternity past and its future to stand
Like a child sea-surrounded on one speck of land.

There to work out the duties that make life
sublime,

Oh, surely there cannot be "plenty of time!"
—Chambers' Journal.

AGITATION IN THE CHURCHES.

If, as has been said, "The agitation of thought is the beginning of wisdom," this ought to be a very wise age. Believing the aphorism to be true, the mental unrest, the fearless questioning of all social, religious and political creeds, usages, laws and ceremonies, may be regarded as one of the hopeful encouraging signs of the times. As the sultry and depressing atmosphere is cleared by the sometimes appalling thunderstorm, which is succeeded by clear skies and a deliciously cool and invigorating air that imparts buoyancy and cheerfulness to the soul—so will storms brewing in church and state throughout the world certainly result in clearer conception of the truth, in moral and spiritual progress, in broader and truer liberty, in more universal happiness and prosperity, and in a higher and nobler type of manhood and womanhood. Nor is this hopeful faith regarding the future in the least diminished because it appears inevitable that this blessed era of righteousness and harmony will be preceded by a period of intellectual strife more startling in physical conflict, more tremendous than history records.

The signs of the times are both ominous and encouraging. There is a growing disposition to break loose from all authority, in family, in church and in state. The old question, "By what authority doest thou these

things?" is being asked by the people of their priests and self-constituted rulers. And the questioners will no longer be satisfied or cowed by the answer of anathema, bullet or bayonet.

The masses are beginning to think. Nor need be it surprising or discouraging if at first they come to wrong and disastrous conclusions. We all learn by the things we suffer. There seems to be no other way. Neither should we wonder at the extravagant and unwarrantable skepticism and insubordination exhibited by the uneducated masses, while the intellectual giants of the age are the pioneers in criticizing and exposing the fallacies of existing institutions and in teaching the people that the only rightful authority either in religious or political affairs is vested exclusively in them and in human reasons. The result must inevitably be a mighty upheaval and overturning of society and modern civilization, to be succeeded by a better, purer, wiser, happier condition than the world has any conception of.

There is a movement among the churches in the East—especially in the Episcopal and the Presbyterian, led by such profound thinkers as Heber Newton, Phillips Brooks, Dr. Rainsford, Dr. Parkhurst, Dr. Briggs and others—which is creating as much commotion as Luther did in his day. They claim for themselves and their followers larger freedom of thought in religious matters and the right of individual interpretation of the teachings of the Bible as well as the creeds of the churches. Whether they will be willing to accord to all the liberty they claim for themselves remains to be seen. To say the least, it is very doubtful.

The brightest minds in the Episcopal church realize that they cannot establish the claim to Apostolic succession and so declare that, even if it could be successfully established, it is unimportant and unnecessary to the validity of their calling and the prosperity of their church. Among nearly all of the Protestant sects there is a growing disposition to regard all external ordinances as non-essential, to be observed or disregarded according to the desire of each person, without in the least detracting from their claim to be obedient followers of Christ and true Christians.

We can understand and respect—though we cannot agree with—the man who rejects the Bible and Chris-

tianity altogether. But it is impossible to understand how any man professing to believe in the precepts and example of Jesus Christ as recorded in the New Testament—and that is the only record of Him which the world accepts—can ignore the ordinances of baptism and laying on of hands as being neither important to or binding upon all disciples of Christ. If each person may select such parts of Christ's teachings and example as suits his caprice and ignore the rest, what is to become of Christianity as a rule of faith and practice? The only difference between such men and Col. Ingersoll is that the latter exercises the right of judgment to reject a little more than the former.

The test of love is obedience. "If ye love me keep my commandments." "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Again, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Either Jesus said these things or He did not. If He did, they are binding on "every creature;" no man, however powerful his intellect, is exempt. If it be claimed that the words referring to baptism and other ordinances are interpolations, then how are we to tell what to accept as Christ's teachings and what to reject? True, we may judge by the context. We should be justified in rejecting as spurious any passages which conflict with the general spirit and tenor of an author's writings. But these passages agree with the entire teachings and practices of Christ and His disciples as recorded in the New Testament; and it is on the assertions and doctrines contained in the New Testament that the faith of most Christians is founded. They have no other basis for their belief. Therefore, if each one selects or rejects what he pleases, the foundation of their faith will be undermined as effectually as would be that of any building if each workman should take out a stone because he considered it unnecessary.

Jesus himself was baptized—so the record states—saying "thus it behoves us to fulfil all righteousness." Can it be right or safe for us to neglect what He felt it incumbent to observe? When Peter preached on the day of Pentecost