-GENESEE EVANGELIST. A Religious and Family Newspaper

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CHILD CONVERSION.

Why should not the faith of the Church be up to its theory upon this subject? We suppose the possibility of the regeneration of children at a very early age, to be admitted on all hands. We suppose that, among Christians, there is no question respecting the fact that it has occurred in many instances; and generally it is treated theoretically as not only a possible, but also a not improbable event. Almost every pastor who has been any length of time in his pastorate, has attended at the dying bed of some dear Sabbath-school scholar, perhaps only four or five years of age, for whom he has gained satisfactory evidence of the saving work of the Holy Spirit in his heart, and of whom he now unhesitatingly speaks as in heaven.

Except upon the most rasping construction of the doctrine of imputation, no one pretends to deny that the child old enough to be a sinner, is also old enough to be a Christian, and we know not of any phase of that doctrine which excludes the possibility of the decisive spiritual change even in infancy. In fact, it is upon this faith in the power of the Spirit to reach the infant heart with its renewing grace, that the orthodox doctrine of the salvation of infants is based. This point granted, we have yet to hear any person maintain that the they passed over the simple story of love influence which may regenerate before the to the account of the natural tenderness of commencement of what we call moral childhood. agency, has its power necessarily suspended for a given season, by the commencement of such moral agency.

More than this, the whole structure of the doctrine and ceremonials of our Church in the matter of infant consecration, presupposes that the very early renewal of the heart of the child is an event toward which special labor will be directed, and which. in praying faith, is to be confidently ex- fellowship or Christians and comforts of repected. Had this most rational pre-supposition been carried out, what an army of short, as years went on, they lived with as child communicants might to-day gladden our thoughts of the future of the Church! And we may add, that we never heard a has wrought. doubt expressed that the doctrine of child conversion has the full sanction of the Holy of tresh impressions, which resulted in their Scriptures, both in its teachings and in the examples which it records. Holy children, true lovers of God, and, as such, beloved of him, are set before us by the Spirit of in- in reality only the fresh awakening of the spiration, as examples which the same grace which, from their childhood, had lain Divine grace which wrought in their almost dormant in their hearts, simply for hearts, may just as easily reproduce in the the want of a practical faith in child confamilies of the living generation. This we suppose to be the speculative belief of the whole Christian Church.

But have we any hearty faith in it? With here and there an exception, does not the shape which the church gives to its stand our Lord as in earnest, when he said efforts for the conversion of sinners, pass over the flocks of little ones, and aim only at the maturer intellect? When Christian parents see their children pass their sixth. ninth and twelfth year without affording any evidence of conversion, are they not tranquilized by the prevalent sentiment that it is not yet time to expect such an event-that, except in extraordinary instances, the saving change must be attended with such views of the divine government, sin, the nature of the atonement, and the system of grace generally, as require a more advanced state of mind? And even of child conversion, is the failure of such in such Christian labors as are directed conversion. And so in a fearful number specially to children, such for example as of instances, it turns out. The most blessed the instructions of the Sabbath-school, is season for hopeful labor with an immortal immediate conversion generally a sought soul is lost. At least nothing that is direct and expected result? Is not the more to the purpose of its conversion is done. It general idea of the utility of such instruc- is deliberately thrown upon the hazards of tion this: that the storing of the child's those periods of life which are thronged mind with Bible truths, the teachings of with embarrassments in the way of convercatechisms and solemn oral instructions, is sion, strengthed by cultivated depravity and a wise pre-occupancy of his susceptibility habits of trifling with religion and eternity. to impressions, which, in the riper stages of The flexible twig has grown into the his existence, may become an instrumental staunch oak, and people whom our Repower toward conversion?

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communion of the church is so often re- only, but forever. Not a few of these were bearing the honorable sears of three cen- Covenant in the city itself. garded as a suspicious one? Such, in children of the covenant, consecrated to turies of persecution, nursing in her bosom many, probably most cases, is the fact. In God with baptismal vows; but the privigeneral it seems to be thought more necessary to make his examination a critical one, the meaning of the promise annexed to it intelligent piety among her members and and to require peculiar evidence of the genuineness of his conversion, because he not fulfilled. Faith failed to comprehend is a child, and therefore less likely to be the subject of a genuine saving change. The inference which we have italicised may be disclaimed, but we see no way to disconnect it with the premises.

In short, with a theory upon the subject sufficiently sound to form the basis of a wide movement for the immediate ingathering of children into the fold, we find, with isolated exceptions, that all effort and hope and faith respecting them is prospective, reaching forward to the time when they shall become old enough to be Christians. The conversion of a child, if it obtains any confidence, is regarded as a sort of exceptional case in the course of the Holy Spirit's work in the world, and, to a sad extent, the church denies even to the children of the covenant, that faith of expectation, without which blessings of grace seldom come.

One part of the mournful fruit of this inconsistency between our theory and our faith, is the loss for a long period, of the use of the Christian life of some who are really Christians. We will explain ourselves. We believe, that when the full history of the work of grace in our world, shall be finally disclosed, it will appear that some, not a few, who in mature life were received to the Church as fresh converts, were after all really converted in childhood. In very early life, they had interesting spiritual exercises, loved Jesus as their precious Saviour, and delighted to approach God in prayer. When questioned, they told this just as they felt it in their experience. Their parents, pastor, or whoever conversed with them, heard it with a sort of pleasure, and yet their conceptions could not take in the possibility that these were cases of real conversion. They expected from a child all the experience which mature converts generally relate; all the law work, the consciousness of proud controversy with God, the pangs of remorse, and the vividness of the emotions in the change from rebellion to submission. Failing to discover any signal demonstrations of this,

Their spiritual care of such children corresponded with their views of the cases. Not regarding them as converted persons. they placed them in no position which would lead them to suppose themselves Christians. As they grew up, they were taught, practically if not preceptively, to hold themselves as belonging to the world. They supposed themselves entitled to none of the ligion, and so stood aloof from them. In loose relations to religion as are possible with one upon whose heart saving grace

Farther on in life, they became subjects coming forward to the communion of the Church, where they were received as new converts. Their supposed conversion was version. Here were fifteen, twenty, or twenty-five years of Christian life virtually lost; its service lost to the Church, and most of its comforts lost to the individual. because certain people would not under "Suffer little children to come unto me." We doubt whether such cases are so very rare as to deprive them of an important bearing while considering the relations of this subject to the prosperity of the Church We believe that a better sentiment respect ing this whole matter, would have long since given to the communion and work of the Church some valuable members who are now registered as the world's people.

But in an immensely greater proportion of cases, the matter is even worse. The natural result of the failure of expectation

Why is it that a child candidate for the | to need, are lost to it, not for a few years | too, is well. But here is an ancient church, | Stamford, Bergen, and the Church of the leges of the covenant were not appreciated, liberty, diligently cultivating scriptural and was not understood, and its conditions were so simple and yet sublime a fact as a child Christian. It may seem like putting a cruel point upon the matter, but we solemnly fear that in too many cases parents have brought their sweet children to the altar, and, as they meant, dedicated them to God, but have done it under the expectation that their first few years would be spent in sin, and then the blessing of the covenant be fulfilled. The first part of this expectation has been only too surely realized. The remainder—alas for fathers and mothers who are now saying, "would God I had died for thee, my son! my son!"

> The subject grows under the pen. We do not propose to prolong it in a series of articles, but we do not feel ourselves dis-

THE REFORMED CHURCH OF HUN-GARY.

In the heart of Europe there lie elements of evangelical efficiency, which we have allowed ourselves almost entirely to overlook in our calculations, as well as to omit from our sympathies and our prayers. There are allies of our Protestantism, and brothers in the Gospel upon the vast plains of Hungary, too numerous and too true to be thus slighted. A great Slavonic people in whom an oriental glow of temperament is mingled with a western love of freedom. presented a remarkable field for the development of the religious consciousness, in which the genial and expansive spirit of Protestantism might well find a footing and home. The Magyars of Hungary are the Scotchmen of Eastern Europe, a libertyloving and self-respecting race. The men of this generation will not soon forget the glorious stroke for liberty made by the countrymen of Kossuth, nor the patriotic fervor that prompted that brilliant leader to cross the ocean, and to master the English tongue for the purpose of gaining and abide with us all. Amen. access to the American ear and heart. A hero of classic mould, he moved across our vision, sweeping all hearts, and almost all his lofty and impassioned eloquence, as he American and Foreign Christian Union. olead for his oppressed and struggling Hungary. That splendid and captivating dream of independence from the tyranny of Austria is passed; Austria itself has taken warning, and especially since Solferino, has been striving to walk in the path of constitutional right, and is removing the chief causes of discontent from her people.

But the deep sources from which these movements sprung, the intelligent, religious convictions that have kept alive self-respect in the hearts of so large a portion of her population, are still there. The Evangelical Reformed Church of Hungary, after three centuries of struggle and oppression, numbers nearly two millions and a half of souls. Every adult connected with it can read and write. The churches are everywhere well attended; the youth are catechized. There is a daily prayer-meeting, morning and evening, and two meetings each week for the exposition of the Scriptures. In family circles, also, the Scriptures are diligently read. The church has a tolerably thorough organization.* and enjoyed entire religious toleration and unmolested self-government from 1791 to 1850. when the woman-whipper, Haynau, stripped them utterly of these rights. In 1859, the government offered them a "Patent" for arranging the affairs of the Protestants. It contained an offer of 95,000 florins yearly and it was warmly urged upon them by their brethren in Germany. But with a far clearer perception of the true interests of the church as a spiritual organization, and with their own indestructible spirit of independence, they rejected an offer of help which was vitiated by conditions of dependence on the civil arm, and the Evangelical Church of Hungary is by its own choice, in the face of poverty, and in the midst of powerful forms of superstition and Erastianized Protestanism, a Free Church.

This church, it seems to us, should be sustained by the prayers and liberality of evangelical Christendom. We are giving to the little Free Church of France, great in the names of its noble leaders, but with only 2,480 members in all France. It is well. We are helping to sustain the Free Italian Church with 2000 members. That,

*Rev. Dr. Geo. Jeffrey, of Glasgow, who visited Pesth in 1851, testified on the floor of the U. P. Synod, last May: 'they are a church of noble and faithful men, differing little from

the very spirit of Scottish and American half millions strong in the heart of Greek and Papal Europe; it is poor; it is ground remaining churches of Christendom are grievously uninformed, or culpably indifferent, or strangely unwise, if they fail to recognize or liberally respond to a call for help from such a quarter as this.

We have already mentioned the fact that these churches had addressed an appeal for aid to the United Presbyterian Church in Scotland. The appeal was published in the United Presbyterian Missionary Record by order of the Synod, and in our issue of September 28th, large extracts were made from it showing the present condition of the church, its efforts in its own behalf, and the particulars of the present movement, for the endowment of educational institutions. The concluding portions of the document are as follows:

Venerable, Synod, Respected Sirs.—A whole church which, in the south-east of Europe, separated and cut off from you by Roman Catholic lands, exists quite isolated, turns to you in need with brotherly words of entreaty. May the Lord write in the Book of Life each of your gifts, through which you have rendered possible the rise of single congregations, the building of so many houses of God to the glory of the Lord; but now the question concerns the existence, the spiritual reviving, and the future welfare of the whole Church of the

land thereon dependent. Pray, O pray, dear brethren, to the God grace, from whom cometh down every good gift, that as he has hitherto done wonders for us; and has continually protected and shielded his Hungarian Evangelical Church in so many dangers, he may still further be gracious to us; that he may keep and protect our churches, maintain in them the pure preaching of his holy word, the ministration of his holy sacraments: that he may strengthen us in faith, awaken our hearts to love, and to the assured hope of eternal life. The grace of the Lord be

We cannot doubt that our churches and liberal men would be very glad to be put in connection with the Reformed Church in judgments, upon the powerful current of Hungary through some such agency as the

PROGRESS OF OUR BRANCH IN PHILA-DELPHIA.

The review of the past twelve years in the history of our branch of the church, shows a degree of progress in this city and vicinity, which is matter for devout gratitude to God, and for the highest encouragement to the friends of the cause. Let any one look for a moment at the roll of the third and fourth Presbyteries in the minutes of the General Assembly for 1853, and then let him turn to the lengthened roll of the present year, with its heavy columns of figures, and he will be amazed at the contrast. Then the two Presbyteries numbered 57 ministers, now they number 71; then they counted 38 churches, now they are increased to 52, almost 50 per cent; that year they reported 257 members, received on profession, and 236 on certificate. This year they report 417 additions on profession, and 454 on certificate. The total of membership was then put at 7,422, with eight churches, "starred." This year the total is 10,086, with but four churches starred, a gain of 2,664, or over 35 per

Turning to the third and fourth Presbyeries of New York for comparison, we are sruck with such facts as the following: While their ministerial force has increased from 67 in 1853 to 113 in the present year, their churches numbering but 31 twelve years ago, have increased by but six, up to the present time. Nevertheless, the membership of the thirty-one churches in 1853 was 7,573, and in 1860 the thirtyseven churches had 10,741 members on their rolls. From these, however, should be deducted the churches in Montreal, and Ahmednugger, which reduces the total membership to 10,285 in thirty-five churches. Our New York brethren undoubtedly push the policy of concentration to an unwise extreme. With the advantage of population one third greater than ours, they have failed to distribute their forces, so as to meet its great wants, and to secure the fruits in their own growth. We look, how-

But for the present, the church in our city must carry the palm for zeal, liberality | brief enough for the necessities of the and far-seeing judgment in occupying busiest. Pastors and church sessions could territory, and taking or strengthening not do a better work than to put a copy in housholds. A Free Church, two and a positions to meet the spiritual wants of a the hands of every communicant, a week growing population. Leading laymen before the sacramental occasion. among us of great wealth have felt this to to the earth by taxes; it is seeking to es- be the most profitable and satisfactory CONFIDENCE IN PRESIDENT JOHNtablish a college, and to save from extinc method of applying their large benefaction a theological seminary. Surely, the tions. Moving cautiously, planting Sabbath-schools, and securing eligible sites beforehand, doubtless with many a humble that section have not yet seen cause to prayer for light, very much in the manner described in Mr. Cummings' paper upon they had long cherished in their fellowthe origin of the Oxford Street Church enterprise, which we published last week, glad to hear it. We hear with pleasure of they have begun almost immediately to true men anywhere, who while disapprovwitness the truit of their labor, and to reap ing, as we do, most decidedly of the lenient that reward of success which is not often denied to the truly enterprising worker for and trustfully for explanation of what they Christ in this field. Within the limits of the city there have

> been organized and supplied with edifices in the last twelve years, Calvary, now num. the rebellion. bering 302 members: Olivet, 239 members; Tabor, 273; North Broad Street, 364; Mantua, 2d (Chapel,) 29; Kenderton, Tioga street, 49; Wharton Street, (built by legacy,) 105; received from the other branch and the building completed. hurried down stairs without a hat, and South Western, 120; received from the hunted out, amid the dense crowd of color-German Reformed, Market Square, 336; ed men, women and children that thronged resuscitated and new edifice built, German, the doors and archways, a suitable place Street, 147. Churches which have built from which to address them. The address themselves new houses in the same time, are is full of kindly feeling. It opens with Walnut Street and Kensington. Two years hearty and grateful recognition of the serago a census of the entire indebtedness of vices of the colored troops in the war, and our churches in and near the city was it recognizes the right of the colored man taken, and a systematic and combined effort to a place in this country, in the following was made to sweep off the entire amount. unequivcoal language:-- "You have gone It was successfully carried out, mainly forth, and, as events have shown, served through the liberality of one man, and a with patience and endurance in the cause most important element of strength from of your country. This is your country, as that moment entered into our church ex- well as anybody else's country." After tension movement. There was not a weak giving the men sound advice as to the promember lagged behind that needed looking per understanding and use of their newly after. And now we find ourselves fairly embarked in another first class enterprise. that of Oxford street, the walls of whose spacious and handsome chapel are nearly up, and the promise of which is beyond corporated and mixed with the people of the any of those yet undertaken, calvary it. self not excepted. While the rural portions of the two Presbyteries show such signs of progress as the new organizations and buildings of Darby 2d, Reeseville, Fairield, Springfield, Vineland, Hockendaqua Mountain, Beverly; making in all, within the bounds of the two Presbyteries, fifteen new organizations, with buildings; one church resuscitated and supplied with a fine building; two organizations acquired and congruously in our system? This is a from other bodies, one of which has been largely aided in building; one first class building in anticipation of an organization; two new edifices erected by older churches, and six other feeble churches entirely relieved of debt; or twenty-seven enterprises lieved of debt; or twenty-seven enterprises there is another problem before us. If we in the field of church extension, in the last are to become a distinct people, although I twelve years. Confining our view to the city itself, we

find ten of the new and acquired organizations within its limits, beside the one church resuscitated, the new enterprise in progress in Oxford street, and four of the churches relieved of debt by the effort already referred to; in all sixteen instances of effort in church extension, mostly wise, vigorously pushed, and in a position to encourage the best hopes for the future.

Since 1852, (we have not the data for 1853 at hand.) the other branch have acquired by transfer and organization thirteen churches in the city limits. Four of these are in the rural districts, and quite small, one is a feeble German Church, and one is for seamen; another called Trinity in Richmond reports 40 members. The 2d Church, Germantown, reports 49 members. Besides these are West Spruce Street, 392 members; Westminster, 275; Kensington. 450: Alexander 145; and Princeton 139. They have also removed and built a handsome edifice for the organization now called West Arch Street Church. We do not know to what extent their churches are or have been in debt, or what, if any, special efforts have been made to relieve them.

The absolute advance of the Presbyterian Church of both the leading branches in this city for the last seven years, may be thus summed un:

Old School, one church, 128 members. New School, including Oxford Street, seven churches, 940 members.

"THE COMMUNION WEEK."-This little treatise selected by our Publication Comever, ere long, for the developing in that mittee, from a larger work, by an evangeliimportant and wealthy section, of that vig- cal clergyman of the Church of England in Dr. Kirk's church, and a man every way or for church extension which certainly is admirably fitted to prepare the communitrusted and esteemed. Mr. Clark, the lies in the very nature of every earnest cant for approaching the Lord's table. It new Secretary, is a Professor in Union Colmember of our body. The proofs that it is contains a meditation on some passage of place to which he is now called A T staunch oak, and people whom our Releaf staunch oak, and people whom o not altogether wanting in that quarter are Scripture, questions for self examination, Stone, D.D., is added to the Prudential

day of the week, preceding the Communion Sabbath. A rich tone of evangelical feeling pervades the little book which is

It will be seen that our East Tennessee correspondent declares that the people of yield the confidence, which as loyal men, citizen and late Governor. We are very policy of the President, still wait patiently do not understand, and for conclusive evidence, now wanting, of high and wholesome statesmanship in his dealings with

We are certainly gratified with the tone of the President's late address to the colored troops of the District. The whole scene was unpremeditated. The President, when informed of the presence of the regiment acquired liberties, he proceeds frankly to discuss the question of suffrage :-

"There is a great problem before us, and I may as well allude to it here in this connection, and that is whether this race can be in-United States, to be made a harmonious and permanent ingredient of the population. This is a problem not settled, but we are in the right line to do so. Slavery raised its hand against the Government, and the Government raised its strong arm and struck it to the ground: hence that part of the problem is settled. The institution of slavery is forever over

"But another part remains to be solved." and that is, can four millions of people, reared as they have been, with all the prejudices of the whites, can they take a place in the com-munity and be made to work harmoniously problem to be considered. Are the digestive powers of the American Government sufficient to receive this element in a new shape, and digest and make it work honorably in the system that has been incorporated?

This is the question to be determined. Let us make this experiment, and make it in good faith. If that cannot be done, then trust that the system can be made to work harmoniously, and that the great problem will be settled without going any further—if it should be so that the two races cannot agree, and live in peace and propriety, and the laws of Providence require that they should be separated—in that event—looking to the far-distant future, and trusting God that it may never come if it should come, Providence, that works mysteriously, but unceasingly and certainly, will point out the way and the mode and the manner by which the people are to be separated, and to be taken to their land of inheritance and promise, for such a one is before them.

Hence we are to make an experiment. Hence let me impress upon you the importance of controlling your passions, developing your intellect, and of applying your physical powers to the industry and interest of the country, and that is the true process by which this question can be settled. Be patient, perse-vering, and forbearing, and you will help to solve this problem and make for yourselves a reputation for the cause for which you have been engaged.'

One can scarcely imagine anything more sensible, more sagacious, or more encouraging, than these words. We still wait for the initiation of the "experiment" of which the President speaks. Is the scene to be the District of Columbia itself?

CHANGES.

It has doubtless been noticed in our report of the meeting of the A. B. C. F. M., ast week, that some changes have been made in the list of officers.

Henry Hill retires from the Prudential Committee, after having served the Board long and well, both as Treasurer and member of the committee. James M. Gordon, Esq., another ex-Treasurer takes his place in the latter relation. Mr. Ward, the new Treasurer, was for ten years the confidential clerk of Mr. Gordon, is entirely familiar with the business of the office, has been the acting Treasurer, since Mr. Gordon retired about nine months since, is a deacon place to which he is now called. A. L.