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ROGER WILLIAMS.

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ROGER WILLIAMS was born about A.D. 1600, probably in Wales. Through the influence of Sir Edward Coke, the famous jurist, long his patron, he became a scholar of Sutton's Hospital (now the Charter House) in 1621, where he obtained an exhibition in 1624. The following year he became a pensioner in Pembroke College, Cambridge, and was graduated in 1627. He is said to have been an expert reporter, and to have made himself useful to his great patron through the employment of this art. There is an old tradition, probable enough in itself, that he devoted considerable attention to the study of law. Whether during, before, or after his university course, he was led to adopt rigorous Separatist principles. The England of 1630 was no place for Nonconformists of even a more moderate type than young Roger Williams. In December of that year he set sail for New England, hoping there to be permitted to enjoy a measure of soul-liberty denied him at home. "Truly it was as bitter as death to me," he writes, some years later to the daughter of Sir Edward Coke, "when Bishop Laud pursued me out of this land, and my conscience was persuaded against the national church, and ceremonies, and bishops, beyond the conscience of your dear father. I say it was as bitter as death to me, when I rode Windsor way, to take ship at Bristol and saw Stoke House, where the blessed man was, and I then durst not acquaint him with my conscience and my flight."

There can be no doubt but that he made a great sacrifice, not in sentiment alone, but in position and prospects as well, in loyally following the dictates of conscience. "God knows," he wrote, forty years afterward, "what gains and preferments I have refused in universities, city, country, and court in Old England, and something in

New England, to keep my soul undefiled in this point, and not to act with a doubting conscience." Roger Williams was not only one of the most accomplished scholars of his age (he was familiar with the Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Dutch and French languages), but he had a dignity of bearing, an eloquence and persuasiveness of tongue and pen, and a force of character, that would have commanded for him the highest positions at home or abroad. Like the great apostle, he counted not such things dear unto him in comparison with loyalty to conscience and to Christ.

Landing in New England in February, 1631, a highly attractive opening almost immediately presented itself. The pastor of the Boston church was returning to England for a prolonged visit, and young Williams was invited to supply his place. Did he accept the invitation? Far from it. The Boston church was "an unseparated church," and he "durst not officiate" it. With him conscience was absolutely supreme, because it represented God's will. He was prompted to give utterance, while at Boston, to a conviction formed, no doubt, long before, familiar and commonplace now, startling and revolutionary then and there, that the magistrate might not punish any sort of "breach of the first table," such as idolatry, Sabbath-breaking, false worship, blasphemy, etc.; and he had thus succeeded in convincing the leading men of the Boston colony that he was an impracticable and dangerous man—all the more dangerous because of his splendid gifts and attainments and his unswerving loyalty to conscience. It was only what might have been expected, when the Salem church a few months later invited him to be their teacher, that six of the leading men of Boston should have sent a joint letter of warning to Governor Endicott of

en, not by their votes and resolutions that they will call themselves "a Church," but by His Spirit, through the Sacrament of Baptism. If Mr. Wesley's preachers and their hearers are members of the one Church, it is because they are baptized, and not because they are Wesleyans. The very name "Wesleyan Methodist Church" would have filled Wesley's soul with horror. "Let all our preachers," said he, "go to Church." He added no codicil to release Mr. H. P. Hughes and the "Forward men." That by "Church" he did not mean his own Chapels, as they may casuistically affect to believe, is clear from his own further emphatic explanation of his meaning. "Alter all plans that will interfere therewith. Let all their people attend Church constantly, and receive the Sacrament every opportunity. Our service is not designed to be instead of the Church service." On the very year in which John Wesley died, one of the preachers, Thomas Taylor, agitated for the violation of his will and plan. Taylor had been educated as a Presbyterian, and had learned the Assembly's Catechism by heart when he was four years old. In spite of the opposition of those whom he called "the Church party" in the society, he opened the new chapel in Liverpool during church hours. He tells us in his diary that he showed them that it was "scriptural and reasonable. All they could say was, that it was the old plan (not to set up Methodism as a schism) and that God had blessed it, and that John Wesley had said, if the Methodists leave the Church, God would leave them." Taylor's next step, as he saw the Methodists still go to church for Holy Communion, was to usurp the priest's office. "Though I had been a preacher thirty years or more," said he, "yet I had never received any formal ordination by the imposition of hands. And although I believed it lawful, yet I did not think it expedient to celebrate the Lord's Supper without some formality of that kind I submitted to a formal ordination." Whence he obtained this mere form we know not. But his case is an early specimen of the small regard paid by the self-exalting preachers to Wesley.

THE CONVERSION OF CHILDREN.

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER, D.D.

From *The Examiner* (Bapt.), New York, November 26, 1891.

THE most important ten years of human life are from six to sixteen years of age.

An enormous proportion, perhaps a majority of people, who pass twenty-one irreligious are never converted at all. Mr. Spurgeon says that the most healthy Christians in his church are commonly those who began to serve Christ when they were young. Such has been my experience and that of many other pastors. Yet some very worthy Christians are strangely skeptical in regard to the conversion of children—especially their own children.

In my humble opinion, if a child can love its parent, and trust its parent, and obey its parent, it can love and trust and obey God. These three mental acts are the very essence of Bible-piety. An ordinary child of ten years can appreciate the story of Christ's life, his deeds of mercy, the sweetness of his promises, and the meaning of his death for sinners, about as well as a man of three-score. A child can love the Lord Jesus with all the ingenuous ardor of its young heart; and in every thought and act towards Christ that child may have the supernatural aid of the Holy Spirit. Just as soon as your son and daughter are old enough to understand right from wrong, they are old enough to do right or wrong. Doing right is a religious act; doing wrong is sin. Sorrow for wrong-doing is contrition. Ceasing to do wrong, from right motive, is repentance. Asking Christ to forgive wrong is an act of faith. Keeping Christ's commandments is the very core of Christianity. Surely, there are innumerable instances in which children have exhibited all these "fruits of the Holy Spirit." Some of the most beautiful examples of deep and fervent piety that I have ever witnessed have been displayed by hearts that were under twelve years of age.

It may be said that "children's minds are volatile and changeable." So they often may be, and therefore require all the more of wise and careful handling. But are grown people never changeable? Do men and women of forty years old never become backsliders? I had rather risk the volatility of childhood than the temptations to self-seeking sharpness and worldliness that beset middle life. If childhood is credulous, manhood and old age are too apt to be skeptical. Better a heart that believes too much and too easily than one that is too slow to believe and to move at all. Oh, be assured, all ye pastors and parents and teachers, that there is no such soil in the world for religious truth and converting grace as the heart of a frank and susceptible and teachable child. From such soil often grows the loftiest and sturdiest piety of after years.

“Those that are planted in the house of the Lord flourish in the courts of our God.”

WHEN BECOME CHURCH MEMBERS.

At what age should a child be admitted to the church? To this question the answer is that every one should be admitted to Christ's Church as soon as they give good evidence of Christian character and conduct. The church is for all who love the Lord Jesus and who seek to serve him. The Bible never makes age a condition of salvation. Shall a truly regenerated child be kept away from Christ's table until it has got over being a child? And what is the use of having a fold if the lambs are all to be kept out until they can stand rough weather?

Great care should be exercised in the admission of children into the church. Haste and injudicious handling may work a mischief that cannot easily be repaired. Not only should there be good evidence that the “root of the matter” is in the young heart, but the solemn and far-reaching step should be fully explained and thoroughly understood. In no direction is there more danger of sad blundering than in dealing with the souls of children. Sunday-school teachers often commit the most lamentable mistakes; and I have known some itinerant evangelists to pursue processes that were as absurd as they were mischievous. For example, several years ago an eminent “children's preacher” held some special services in a church not far from mine. He got together a crowd of Sunday-school youngsters, addressed them in an impassioned style, and then asked, “How many of you want to be Christians? Who of you loves the Lord Jesus?” Those who “rose up” or remained to be prayed with, were at once ticketed by this impulsive revivalist as young converts. He said to me at the end of a week of this hot-bed process, “I have had one hundred conversions in Mr. B——'s church.” After a few months I asked Mr. B—— how many of those young “converts” gave good evidence of sound conversion? He replied, “Not over a dozen.” Fortunately, the pastor was not so headlong as to rush all these crude cases into church membership. From long observation I have become convinced that the wholesale process of dealing with children is a monstrous mistake that is often fraught with most deplorable results.

In the recently published biography of that eminent servant of God, Professor Austin Phelps, is a most suggestive account of his own experience when he was twelve

years old. He says: “There was a revival of religion” (in his father's church) “which affected me powerfully for the time. I went through the usual excitement of such scenes, attended children's prayer-meetings, took prominent part in them, prayed much in secret, and thought of little else than the salvation of my soul. If any one at that crisis had kindly diverted my thoughts from the idea of regeneration to that of simple right living in the ways natural to a child, I think I might then have become a child of God. What I needed was to be made to believe in truth-telling, honesty, honor, unselfishness, care for the happiness of others as well as love to God and trust in Christ as Christian things. I had no conception of them as such. I longed for, and prayed for, and—worst of all—waited for some sublime and revolutionary change of heart; and what that was as a fact in a child's experience I had not the remotest idea. My belief is that hundreds of older people turned to God in that revival. But I have yet to learn of one of my own age who was at all benefited by it. To me it was an unmitigated evil, hardening my religious sensibilities, and the prelude to a period of worldliness in which I lived without prayer.”

Professor Phelps was not only a brilliant scholar, but a devout and orthodox theologian, and his testimony here is of great value on two important points. He emphasizes the importance of ethical instruction with children. To ask a child only these questions “Do you love Christ?” and “Do you want to be a Christian?” and then fail to tell them that the only proof of that “love” is that they aim to keep Christ's commandments is a fearful mistake. It is an appeal to the emotions and not to the conscience, and it is likely to end in a thin, vaporous religion, or in a reaction towards hardness of heart. Conduct is the main idea to be kept before a child's mind, and when the Holy Spirit is doing a genuine work on that child the result is seen in making that child a better boy and a better girl in the home, in the school, in its plays, and everywhere else. “By their fruits ye shall know them.”

The other important point is that in a revival, no one needs more wise and careful and prayerful handling than the young and susceptible. They are so liable to be carried away by currents of sympathy or else misled by well-meaning but injudicious bunglers. The wholesale process of dealing with them in the mass—whether by an evangelist, or a pastor, or a Sunday-school superintendent—is fraught with prodigious

dangers. Each child should be dealt with individually, and according to its peculiar temperament and surroundings. A parent is God's appointed trustee of a child's soul, and a Christian home is God's ordained training-school. When the child has no such home-influence, then the pastor and the Sunday-school teacher should fervently pray for common sense and divine direction, as well as for loving patience, while they are attempting to guide childish hearts to Jesus and to a true Christian life.

WHERE WAS PARADISE SITUATED ?

BY PROFESSOR DR. FRITZ HOMMEL.

From *The Sunday-School Times* (Udenom.), Philadelphia, December 3, 1891.

LIKE the vibration from a lost bell, there comes down to us from the remotest past, in the traditions and tales of ancient peoples, the knowledge of a long-vanished, happy childhood of the human race. A wondrous garden, watered by four rivers, with the tree of knowledge (the tree of life of the Babylonians) in its midst, and therein man walking still in the state of innocence in immediate intercourse with his Maker,—this is the pith of those traditions which the Bible has preserved for us in simple beauty, and, as compared with others, in the purest and most faithful account.

"Thereupon," says the oldest narration in the Scriptures (Gen. 2 : 8 ff.), "Jahveh planted a park in Eden [that is, in the hitherto waste and unplanted plain ; Babylonian *edinnu*] in the [far] East, and brought thither the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground Jahveh made to grow trees of all kinds that are pleasant to see and bear well-tasted fruits. And in the midst of the garden the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And a river went forth from Eden for watering the garden, and from thence it was parted into four heads. Then Jahveh took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to till it and to keep it,"—and so on to Genesis 3 : 21.

The purpose of this paper is to show how exactly we can ascertain that the ancient Hebrews conceived of Paradise as in South Babylonia, at the mouth of the Euphrates and Tigris. If we examine more closely the Bible passage Genesis 2 : 11-14, it will appear, first of all, that, in spite of the express mention of the Tigris and the Euphrates, the matter is not as simple as might appear at first sight.

"And a river took its rise from Eden to water the garden, and from thence it parted, and that into four branches" (literally, "heads," or "sources"). To this passage, which we have translated already above, is joined, as a more exact explanation of the site of the garden, the following : "The name of the first is Pishon, that is it which encompasses the whole of Khavila, where there is gold, and the gold of that land is good ; there also are found Bedolakh-resin and Schobam-stones. And the second river is called Gikhon ; that is it which encompasses the whole of Kush. And the third river is called Khiddeqel ; that is it which flows along Asshur. And the fourth river is the Përat" (Babyl. *Purattu*).

Clear as it is that the Khiddeqel (or Tigris, strictly *ghid-Deqel*, Assyrian *Diglat*, Arabic *Dijlat*) and the Euphrates in this connection point us to some province of Mesopotamia or Babylonia, it is just as hard to define that more exactly by the further details. These hitherto have been misunderstood, and thus have called forth an abundant literature on the theme "Where was Paradise Situated ?" The way from the mountains of Armenia, in which both the Euphrates and the Tigris take their rise, down to the Persian Gulf, into which they both flow, is a long one, as everybody knows. The quite long and at the beginning extraordinarily wide territory, through which these two rivers pass from their source to their mouth, hardly can be identified with Paradise. But in what part of this extensive region was it that Hebrew tradition saw the garden of God ? Was it in the wild highlands of Armenia, where, besides the Euphrates and the Tigris, the Araxes and the Halys take their rise ? Or was it Mesopotamia, where, however, we should seek in vain for a Pishon or a Gihon ? Or was it the northern part of Babylonia, where at one point the Euphrates and the Tigris draw so near each other that in times of flood they seem, in fact, to form but a single stream, and where canals large enough to be regarded as two other rivers branched off east and west from the Euphrates ? Or, finally, was it the southern part of Babylonia, lying on the Gulf of Persia, where two rivers pouring in from Elam, the Kherkhah and the Karoon, might be thought, and actually have been thought, to be the Pishon and the Gihon ?

Of the many attempts to answer this interesting question, two are especially worthy of attention, as the only two which have been made with the full equipment of science for the undertaking. The first is that