

GEORGE MUELLER OF BRISTOL
AND HIS WITNESS TO A PRAYER-HEARING GOD
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The originally "authorized memoir".

BY
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**Reasons Which Led Mr. Mueller To Establish An
Orphan House**

I HAD constantly cases brought before me which proved that one of the especial things which the children of God needed in our day was *to have their faith strengthened*. For instance: I might visit a brother who worked fourteen or even sixteen hours a day at his trade, the necessary result of which was that not only his body suffered, but his soul was lean, and he had no enjoyment in the things of God. Under such circumstances I might point out to him that he ought to work less, in order that his bodily health might not suffer, and that he might gather strength for his inner man by reading the word of God, or by meditation over it, and by prayer. The reply, however, I generally found to be something like this:

"But if I work less, I do not earn enough for the support of my family. Even now, whilst I work so much, I have scarcely enough. The wages are so low, that I must work hard in order to obtain what I need."

There was no trust in God. No real belief in the truth of that word:

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness:
and all these things shall be added unto you."

I might reply something like this:

"My dear brother, it is not your work which supports your family, but the Lord; and He who has fed you and your family when you could not work at all, on account of illness, would surely provide for you and yours if, for the sake of obtaining food for your inner man, you were to work only for so many hours a day as would allow you proper time for retirement. And is it not the case now, that you begin the work of the day after having had only a few hurried moments for prayer and when you leave off your work in the evening, and mean then to read a little of the word of God, are you not too much worn out in body and mind to enjoy it, and do you not often fall asleep whilst reading the Scriptures or whilst on your knees in prayer?"

The brother would allow it was so; he would allow that my advice was good but still I read in his countenance, even if he should not have actually said so,

"How should I get on if I were to *carry out* your advice?"

I longed, therefore, to have something to point the brother to, as a visible proof that our God and Father is the same faithful God as ever He was; as willing as ever to PROVE Himself to be the LIVING GOD, in our day as formerly, *to all who put their trust in Him.--*

Again, sometimes I found children of God tried in mind by the prospect of old age, when they might be unable to work any longer, and therefore were harassed by the fear of having to go into the poor-house. If in such a case I pointed out to them how their Heavenly Father has always helped those who put their trust in Him, they might not, perhaps, always say that times have changed; but yet it was evident enough that God was not looked upon by them as the LIVING God. My spirit was oft times bowed down by this, and I longed to see something before the children of God whereby they might see that He does not forsake, even in our day those who rely upon Him.--

Another class of persons were brethren in business, who suffered in their soul and brought guilt on their consciences, by carrying on their business almost in the same way as unconverted persons do. The competition in trade, the bad times, the over-peopled country, were given as reasons why, if the business were carried on simply according to the word of God it could not be expected to do well. Such a brother, perhaps, would express the wish that he might be differently situated; but very rarely did I see *that there was a stand made for God, that there was the holy determination to trust in the living God, and to depend on Him, in order that a good conscience might be maintained.* To this class likewise I desired to show, by a visible proof, that God is unchangeably the same.--

Then there was another class of persons, individuals who were in professions in which they could not continue with a good conscience, or persons who were in an unscriptural position with reference to spiritual things; but both classes feared, on account of the consequences, to give up the profession in which they could not abide with God, or to leave their position, lest they should be thrown out of employment. My spirit longed to be instrumental in giving them not only instances from the word of God of His willingness and ability to help all those who rely upon Him, but *to show them by proofs* that He is the same in our day. I well knew *that the word of God ought to be enough*, and it was, by grace, enough to me; but still, I considered that I ought to lend a helping hand to my brethren, if by any means, by this visible proof to the unchangeable faithfulness of the Lord I might strengthen their hands in God; for I remembered what a great blessing my own soul had received through the Lord's dealings with His servant, A. H. Francké, who, in dependence upon the living God alone, established an immense orphan house, which I had seen many times with my own eyes. I, therefore, judged myself bound to be the servant of the Church of God, in the particular point on which I had obtained mercy namely, *in being able to take God by His word and to rely upon it.* All these exercises of

my soul, which resulted from the fact that so many believers, with whom I became acquainted were harassed and distressed in mind, or brought guilt on their consciences, on account of not trusting in the Lord; were used by God to awaken in my heart the desire of setting before the church at large, and before the world, a proof that He has not in the least changed and this seemed to me best done by the establishing of an orphan house. It needed to be something which could be seen, even by the natural eye. Now if I, a poor man simply by prayer and faith, obtained, *without asking any individual*, the means for establishing and carrying on an orphan house, there would be something which, with the Lord's blessing, might be instrumental in strengthening the faith of the children of God, besides being a testimony to the consciences of the unconverted of the reality of the things of God. This, then, was the primary reason for establishing the orphan house. I certainly did from my heart desire to be used by God to benefit the bodies of poor children bereaved of both parents, and seek, in other respects, with the help of God, to do them good for this life--

I also particularly longed to be used by God in getting the dear orphans trained up in the fear of God;-- but still, the first and primary object of the work was (and still is:) that God might be magnified by the fact that the orphans under my care are provided with all the need only *by prayer and faith*, without any one being asked by me or my fellow labourers, whereby it may be seen that God is FAITHFUL STILL, AND HEARS PRAYER STILL,

The three chief reasons for establishing an orphan house are:

- 1. That God may be glorified, should He be pleased to furnish me with the means, in its being seen that it is not a vain thing to trust in Him; and that thus the faith of His children may be strengthened.
- 2. The spiritual welfare of fatherless and motherless children.
- 3. Their temporal welfare.

That to which my mind has been particularly directed is to establish an orphan house in which destitute fatherless and motherless children may be provided with food and raiment, and scriptural education. Concerning this intended orphan house I would say:

- 1. It is intended to be in connection with the Scriptural Knowledge Institution for Home and Abroad, in so far as respects the reports, accounts, superintendence, and the principles on which it is conducted, so that, in one sense, it may be considered as a new object of the Institution, yet with this difference, *that only those funds shall be applied to the orphan house which are expressly given for it*. If, therefore, any believer should prefer to support either those objects which have been hitherto assisted by the funds of this Institution, or the intended orphan house, it need only be mentioned, in order that the money may be applied accordingly.

- 2. It will only be established if the Lord should provide both the means for it and suitable persons to conduct it. As to the means, I would make the following remarks:

the reason for proposing to enlarge the field is not because we have of late particularly abounded in means; we have been rather straitened. The many gracious answers, however, which the Lord had given concerning this Institution led brother C--- r and me to give ourselves to prayer, asking Him to supply us with means to carry on the work, as we consider it unscriptural to contract debts. During five days, we prayed several times, both unitedly and separately. After that time, the Lord began to answer our prayers, so that, within a few days, about 50*l.* was given to us. I would further say that the very gracious and tender dealings of God with me, in having supplied, in answer to prayer, for the last five years, my own temporal wants without any certain income, so that money, provisions, and clothes have been sent to me at times when I was greatly straitened, and that not only in small but large quantities and not merely from individuals living in the same place with me, but at a considerable distance; and that not merely from intimate friends, but from individuals whom I have never seen: all this, I say, has often led me to think, even as long as four years ago, that the Lord has not given me this simple reliance on Him merely for myself, but also for others. Often, when I saw poor neglected children running about the streets at Teignmouth, I said to myself:

"May it not be the will of God that I should establish schools for these children, asking Him to give me the means?"

However, it remained only a thought in my mind for two or three years. About two years and six months since I was particularly stirred up afresh to do something for destitute children, by seeing so many of them begging in the streets of Bristol, and coming to our door. It was not, then, left undone on account of want of trust in the Lord, but through an abundance of other things calling for all the time and strength of my brother Craik and myself; for the Lord had both given faith, and had also shown by the following instance, in addition to very many others, both what He can and what He will do. One morning, while sitting in my room, I thought about the distress of certain brethren, and said thus to myself:

"Oh, that it might please the Lord to give me the means to help these poor brethren!"

In about an hour afterwards I had 60*l.* sent as a present for myself from a brother whom up to this day I have never seen, and who was then, and is still, residing several thousand miles from this. Should not such an experience, together with promises like that one in John xiv.13,14, encourage us to ask with all boldness, for ourselves and others, both temporal and spiritual blessings? The Lord, for I cannot but think it was He, again and again brought the thought about these poor children to my mind, till at last it ended in the establishment of "The Scriptural Knowledge Institution for Home and Abroad"; since the establishment of which, I have had it in a similar way brought to my mind, first about fourteen months ago, and repeatedly since, but especially during these last weeks, to establish an orphan house. My frequent prayer of late has been, that if it be of God, He

would let it come to pass; if not, that He would take from me all thoughts about it.

The latter has not been the case, but I have been led more and more to think that the matter may be of Him. Now, if so, He can influence His people in *any part of the world* (for I do not look to Bristol, nor even to England, but to the living God, whose is the gold and the silver), to intrust me and brother C---r, whom the Lord has made willing to help me in this work with the means. Till we have them, we can do nothing in the way of renting a house, furnishing it, etc. Yet, when once as much as is needed for this has been sent us, as also proper persons to engage in the work, we do not think it needful to wait till we have the orphan house endowed, or a number of yearly subscribers for it; but we trust to be enabled by the Lord, who has taught us to ask for our daily bread, to look to Him for the supply of the daily wants of those children whom He may be pleased to put under our care. Any donations will be received at my house. Should any believers have tables, chairs, bedsteads, bedding, earthenware, or any kind of household furniture to spare, for the furnishing of the house; or remnants, or pieces of calico, linen, flannel, cloth, or any materials useful for wearing apparel; or clothes already worn, they will be thankfully received.

Respecting the persons who are needed for carrying on the work, a matter of no less importance than the procuring of funds, I would observe that we look for them to God himself, as well as for the funds; and that all who may be engaged as masters, matrons, and assistants, according to the smallness or largeness of the Institution; must be known to us as true believers; and moreover, as far as we may be able to judge, must likewise be qualified for the work.

- 3. At present nothing can be said as to the time when the operations are likely to commence; nor whether the Institution will embrace children of both sexes, or be restricted either to boys or girls exclusively; nor of what age they will be received, and how long they may continue in it; for though we have thought about these things, yet we would rather be guided in these particulars by the amount of the means which the Lord may put into our hands, and by the number of the individuals whom He may provide for conducting the Institution. Should the Lord condescend to use us as instruments, a short printed statement will be issued as soon as something more definite can be said.
- 4. It has appeared well to us to receive only such destitute children as have been bereaved of both parents.
- 5. The children are intended, if girls, to be brought up for service; if boys, for a trade; and therefore they will be employed, according to their ability and bodily strength in useful occupations, and thus help to maintain themselves; besides this, they are intended to receive a plain education; but the chief and the special end of the Institution will be to seek, with God's blessing, to bring them to the knowledge of Jesus Christ by instructing them in the Scriptures.

FURTHER ACCOUNT RESPECTING THE ORPHAN HOUSE, ETC.

When, of late, the thoughts of establishing an orphan house, in dependence upon the Lord, revived in my mind, during the first two weeks I only prayed that if it were of the Lord He would bring it about; but if not, that He graciously would be pleased to take all thoughts about it out of my mind. My uncertainty about knowing the Lord's mind did not arise from questioning whether it would be pleasing in His sight that there should be an abode and scriptural education provided for destitute fatherless and motherless children; but whether it were His will that I should be the instrument of setting such an object on foot, as my hands were already more than filled. My comfort, however, was, that, if it were His will, He would provide not merely the means, but also suitable individuals to take care of the children, so that my part of the work would take only such a portion of my time as, considering the importance of the matter, I might give, notwithstanding my many other engagements. The whole of those two weeks I never asked the Lord for money or for persons to engage in the work. On December 5th, however, the subject of my prayer all at once became different. I was reading Psalm Ixxxii., and was particularly struck, more than at any time before, with verse 10:

"Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it."

I thought a few moments about these words, and then was led to apply them to the case of the orphan house. It struck me that I had never asked the Lord for anything concerning it, except to know His will respecting its being established or not; and I then fell on my knees, opened my mouth wide, asking him for much. I asked in submission to His will, and without fixing a time when He should answer my petition. I prayed that He would give me a house, i.e., either as a loan, or that someone might be led to pay the rent for one, or that one might be given permanently for this object; further, I asked Him for £1000; and likewise for suitable individuals to take care of the children. Besides this, I have been since led to ask the Lord to put into the hearts of His people to send me articles of furniture for the house, and for clothes for the children. When I was asking the petition I was fully aware what I was doing, i.e., that I was asking for something which I had no natural prospect of obtaining from the brethren whom I know, but which was not too much for the Lord to grant.