

The Bristol Miracle



AN ACCOUNT OF GOD'S FAITHFULNESS TO THE WORK OF GEORGE MÜLLER

Müllers

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Part I

George Müller

An Introduction

George Müller was an ordinary man, but his undeniable faith, implicit trust and love continue to be an inspiration and witness to all who commit their lives to God.



One of the many fascinating aspects of George Müller's life is that it illustrates very simply the power of God. There are those who find it difficult to accept the authenticity of much of the Scriptures and view many of the remarkable stories with scepticism. George Müller received nearly £1,500,000 in answer to prayer without ever needing to ask for funds. At present-day prices, this would be well over £86,000,000. Had this happened two or three thousand years ago, the same sceptics would, undoubtedly, have questioned its authenticity. As it happened in the latter part of the nineteenth century with modern records and factual evidence, the facts can be challenged but certainly not disputed.

What is perhaps even more remarkable is that it is the SAME TODAY. The George Müller Charitable Trust makes no appeals, yet through the same trust in God, money is received almost daily for the work, both home and abroad.

George Müller was the faithful servant whom God used. This fact has an intriguing parallel with many Biblical characters.

God Chooses All Types

God often chose ordinary men, sometimes men with an inglorious and doubtful past, men who often mocked the faith, and men with whom a great deal of patience was needed because of their reluctance to turn away from

the 'good life'. George Müller had been all of these types.

George Müller was born in Kroppenstaedt, a Prussian village, on 27 September 1805. The son of a tax collector, he did not become a Christian until he was twenty years of age. His father wanted him to enter the ministry but only so that he could retire to the ease of his son's manse. Despite the kindness and generosity continually shown by his father, George Müller was a

habitual thief, inveterate liar, gambler and drunkard, who, at the age of only 16, spent five weeks in prison for non-payment of hotel bills. He even had the audacity to become a confirmed member of the Lutheran Church and take Communion in spite of being well aware of his sinful ways.



The House of George Müller's Birth

George Müller's conversion was dramatic. He relinquished many of his sinful ways at once and, as his understanding of the Christian way of life increased, dedicated his life to Jesus Christ. When he came to England in 1829 he formed a friendship with a quiet, godly and scholarly Scotsman named Henry Craik. This became a life-long friendship, and under God's guidance they formed a great spiritual partnership in the Gospel and in children's work.

Through the work of the Orphan Homes and the Scriptural Knowledge Institution, both of which Müller founded, many responded to the Gospel and heard the call to dedicate their lives to God. The work continues today on the same principles - and the witness to God's faithfulness is still used to the glory of God.

An Inspiration

The most significant aspect of George Müller's 93 years on earth was his absolute obedience to the will of God. It is this example which inspired, and continues to inspire, many to know and exercise that faith which God requires of us all. The fact that the Spirit of God transformed a rebellious, sinful and self-determined young man to become such a man of God must

surely give rise to hope for each one of us. **‘Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord’**. George Müller trusted and his trust was never in vain.

The Wasted Years

George Müller was born in 1805 and, until his conversion to the Christian faith in 1825, there was, on his own admission, hardly a sin into which he had not fallen.

He had become a habitual thief, liar, gambler and a cheat, devising cunning and devious methods to fulfil his evil desires. Besides his immoral ways, it was Müller’s need for alcoholic drink that caused many of his problems. Even when his mother lay dying, he was found roaming the streets in a drunken state.

The Prodigal Son

The similarities between George Müller’s early life and the parable of the Prodigal Son are quite remarkable, a fact not unnoticed by many writers and commentators.

In 1810 George Müller moved with his family from Kroppenstaedt to nearby Heimersleben, some four miles away. He and his brother received inadequate parental control and their father gave them plenty of money. They were encouraged to keep records of their spending, but that is where parental discipline and control ended.

George Müller regularly stole money from his father, invariably when collecting debts on his father’s behalf, by handing over much less than he had collected. His father often had to make up missing money and, on one occasion, a successfully laid trap caused Müller to be punished, but he was unrepentant.

Müller was sent to a classical school at Halberstaedt, hoping to become a Lutheran clergyman. Despite being a brilliant pupil, he continued his sinful ways. His stealing became more compulsive and on one occasion he managed to retain all but one twelfth of the fees that his father had given him for confirmation classes.

Deceit, Lies and Prison

On one occasion Müller embarked upon a remarkable period of deceit and lies as he went from one hotel to another, often in the company of a woman, living a 'playboy' life, but with no money. After pawning valuable possessions and leaving his remaining belongings at one hotel as security, the law caught up with him and he ended up in prison. Even in prison, Müller told the most unbelievable lies to impress a fellow prisoner.

After a month in prison his father bailed him out, settled his debts and beat him. For a while Müller tried to please his father and, indeed, tried to change his ways. It was not long, however, before he was in debt again and this time he concocted a story of having been robbed and was more than compensated by his sympathetic friends. Furthermore, he managed to get some of his debts written off and payment of the remaining ones delayed. When his friends eventually discovered the truth this did not seriously concern him.



Halle University

The last sinful escapade came when he was at Halle University studying theology. He and three fellow students forged papers and documents so that they could go on a vacation of worldly pleasure in Switzerland. Müller even then managed to cheat his friends by having charge of the money and, through devious means, only paying two thirds of that paid by the others.

After the Swiss holiday one member of the party, Beta, who was an old friend and fellow student of Müller, told him of a prayer meeting which he often attended. Müller expressed a desire to go with him and it was that meeting which was to change his whole life.

'For God so loved the world, that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.'

It pleased God to teach Müller something of that precious truth.

The Turning Point

George Müller's conversion in November 1825 was dramatic and his whole direction, purpose and way of life changed immediately.

He was introduced to the prayer meeting by his friend Beta and upon arrival was greeted with: 'Come as often as you please; house and heart are open to you.' This welcome touched George Müller very much. The singing of hymns, study of the Bible and reading of a printed sermon made a deep impression and he felt this night he would find 'something' for which he had been searching all his life. The genuine love, great joy and deep humility in the hearts of the members of that group had a profound effect on George Müller, but perhaps the turning point was when they all knelt to pray. He had never seen this before, let alone knelt to pray himself, and the whole meeting breathed such a spiritual atmosphere that he entered upon an entirely new experience: he was born again! No longer an idle and lazy character, but a disciple of the Living God.

Some time later Müller said about that evening, 'I understood something of the reason why the Lord Jesus died on the cross and suffered agonies in the Garden of Gethsemane; even that thus, bearing the punishment due to us, we might not have to bear it ourselves. And therefore, apprehending in some measure the love of Jesus for my soul, I was constrained to love Him in return.'

Müller continued his theological studies at Halle University and within two months of his conversion to the Christian faith decided to become a missionary. This decision angered his father so much that he withdrew his son's financial support, which left Müller dependent on God alone.

A Test of Faith

Without his father's allowance Müller was penniless. Very shortly after committing the problem to God he was asked to teach German to visiting American professors and for this he was paid much more than he actually needed.

The greatest obstacle George Müller had to overcome was the acquisition of a passport to attend a missionary training school in London, because he was expected to serve his national service. After much prayer, he went through with the signing up process for the Army and, following a series of medicals, he was discharged from active service for life for being medically unfit.

In 1829, George Müller made his way to London to train as a missionary to the Jews. After only a short time at the missionary training school he became seriously ill and nearly died. It was while recuperating in the Devon town of Teignmouth that Müller's life was to take another change of direction.

Preaching

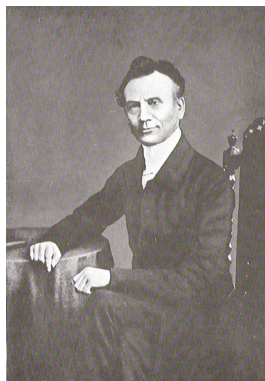
George Müller met up with Henry Craik, a Scotsman who was to become his closest friend, and it was this quiet, godly and learned man who taught Müller the need to wholly trust in, and be obedient to, the will of God. After resigning from the Mission school to take up preaching engagements, Müller was offered the Pastorate of a Church in Teignmouth with an honorarium of £50 per annum. He felt that God would provide all his needs and that he should be wholly dependent upon Him and stopped receiving the honorarium. From that moment on, until his death in 1898, Müller grew in obedience and trust in God for everything.

The Change of Direction

With the help of his very good friend Henry Craik, he gained a much greater understanding of the Scriptures and the will of God. During this period of learning in Teignmouth, Müller realised that many preachers failed to communicate the truths of the Gospel message and tended to read printed sermons which were often apologetic, lacking conviction and inspiration. As Müller began to preach God's Word in a straight, dynamic and forthright manner, he was continually encouraged by the response of many listeners and the increasing number of conversions. Despite the growing response to his preaching there were many who reacted strongly against his direct approach, but somehow they seemed powerless to do anything about it, except listen.

The Move to Bristol

In 1830 George Müller married Mary Groves, who became a true companion and support for the changing years that lay ahead. After two years he knew that his time in Teignmouth was coming to an end and although he was settled and very happy, he sensed that a move was imminent.



Henry Craik had already moved to Bristol and when he wrote to his best friend inviting him to make the same move, Müller knew this call was from God. So in 1832 George and Mary Müller left the Devon town of Teignmouth for Bristol where God had a plan prepared for His now faithful servant.

The Bethesda Chapel was the next pastoral ministry for Müller. The large Chapel was run down and the congregation of six looked extremely small, but, with a year's guarantee of rent, Müller committed the future needs of the church to God. The membership grew, financial support came and the Bethesda Chapel prospered both materially and spiritually.

Mary Müller had now given birth to daughter Lydia, just as a cholera epidemic spread through Bristol. This epidemic resulted in a death rate of high proportions, especially among the adults, and countless children became orphaned.

George Müller, as always, committed the whole problem to God and sought guidance as to what should be done.

Prayer Answered

Müller also prayed daily for individual conversions and prayed as long as fifty years for some people which illustrates his faith and trust in God. His own father was daily in his prayers and when the opportunity came to visit

Heimersleben, Müller was overjoyed. The re-union with father and brother was a happy one and Müller's obvious love for God had a profound effect on his father. At the conclusion of the visit Herr Müller said to his son, 'May God help me to follow your example, and to act according to what you have said to me.'

The Foundation of the Scriptural Knowledge Institution

In 1834, Müller founded the Scriptural Knowledge Society (later to become Institution - see adjacent).

SKI

The Scriptural Knowledge Institution, or SKI (pronounced “sky”), as it is known, was founded on March 5th, 1834. George Müller laid down four main objectives, which are shown here. In addition, he felt that since this was of God, there would be no patronage, appeals or requests for subscription and that the Institution should never contract any debts. He was convinced that God would provide all resources and meet every need.

Within the first seven months £167 had been received and by May 1894 the figure had risen to half a million pounds. The institution still flourishes today with the same principles, although there have been some changes to meet today’s needs. SKI now sends out over £1 million per annum, most of which is received from donors who express a wish that the charity supports various workers and organisations in the UK and overseas.

The objects of SKI were expressed as follows:

- 1. To assist Day-schools, Sunday-schools and Adult-schools, in which instruction is given upon Scriptural principles, and, as far as the Lord may graciously give the means and supply us with suitable teachers, to establish Schools of this kind.*
- 2. To put the children of poor persons to such Day-schools, in order that they may be truly instructed in the ways of God, besides learning those things which are necessary for this life.*
- 3. To circulate the Holy Scriptures.*
- 4. To aid in supplying the wants of Missionaries and Missionary Schools.*

Note: These objectives are as printed in a document entitled ‘First Report of the Operations of the Scriptural Knowledge Society for Home and Abroad’ and was signed by both George Müller and Henry Craik on the 7th October, 1834.

Part 2

The Orphanages



The Beginnings of the Orphan Homes

The worsening cholera epidemic and the ever increasing number of homeless children caused George Müller to realise immediate action was required, and in 1835 he called a public meeting with a view to opening an Orphan Home. This was a complete step in faith, and four days before the meeting, God confirmed that step through the Scripture - 'Open wide your mouth and I will fill it' (Psalm 81 verse 10).



Orphan Homes Opened

George Müller asked God for £1,000 and the right people to run such a home. Within five months these had been provided. Mrs Müller, together with friends, began to furnish their own home in Wilson Street in the St Paul's area of Bristol, which was to accommodate thirty girls. The Orphan Homes became the fifth object of SKI.

A further three houses in Wilson Street were furnished, catering for a total of 130 children. When in 1845 this number had risen even further without additional premises, Müller felt the need to erect a purpose-built home to accommodate 300 children. This project required a massive sum of £10,000.

Once more Müller's prayers were answered as the additional money was provided and he bought a rural site at Ashley Down, just outside the city's boundary, well below the advertised asking price. In 1849 the first Home was opened, accommodating 300 children.

By 1870 there was a total of five Houses at Ashley Down costing over £100,000 and housing more than 2,000 children. All the money and workers came as a direct result of prayer, with no debts being incurred and no appeals or requests were ever made. There are many remarkable stories of the answers to prayer and the buildings and the work continue to be a testimony to His faithfulness and grace of God.

George Müller's total obedience was rewarded by the fulfilment of God's promise: ***"Open wide your mouth and I will fill it."***



The five Orphan Houses

Life in the Orphan Homes

When Müller started the Children's Homes his primary objective was not the welfare of the children. His main concern was that it should be seen that God was providing all the needs as a result of prayer and faith, without anyone being asked or approached.

From the time George Müller started the first home in Wilson Street in 1836 with its 30 girls, until the completion of the fifth Home at Ashley Down, bringing his total family to more than 2,000, he was faced with all manner of social problems. Disease was the greatest hazard, ranging from outbreaks of cholera to smallpox epidemics. Poor sanitary conditions, open sewers, unclean drinking water, rubbish piled in the street, no provision for removing the dead and no preventative measures against disease all caused a death rate of high proportions. Despite all this and a slow acting Government, Müller managed through prayer and faith, to protect his 'large family' against such filth and degradation. Indeed, the Müller orphans were more fortunate than most.



Although there were some children who did not enjoy life in the Homes, for many of them it became the means of their salvation. The alternative was little food, often no home and the meaning of life became a matter of survival. The future held little or no hope. Müller provided, through God, hope, love and a family life with a sound Christian foundation.

The children were awakened at six in the morning and, after breakfast at eight, there was a Bible reading and a time of prayer.

The evening session often included an outside guest speaker.

Clothing

All the children in the Homes were smartly dressed. The boys were given three suits, and those nine years and above wore a smart navy-blue Eton jacket, waistcoat and corduroy trousers together with a glazed peaked cap. The younger boys wore a blue shirt instead of the jacket, and short cloaks were provided for bad weather conditions. The girls wore a navy blue cotton dress, which was protected by a cloak, shawl or tippet according to the weather. All girls wore a straw coloured bonnet tied with an attractive band. The girls also had varying hairstyles according to age. For example, the older girls who were capable of doing their own hair were allowed to grow it to shoulder length or longer.

Education

The education policy that Müller devised was of a high standard and comprised a wide variety of subjects. He was often criticised for this high standard, which was described as 'above their station'. Only a few years earlier, Dr Andrew Bell had written in his book - 'An Experiment in Education' - 'There was a risk of elevating by an indiscriminate education, the minds of those doomed to the drudgery of daily labour, above their condition and thereby rendering them discontented and unhappy with their lot.'



Müller did not agree. In fact he employed a School Inspector to maintain the high standards. In 1885 the average percentage of all children in their annual examination based on six subjects was 91.1%. Because of the duration of the education provided by Müller, he was accused of robbing factories, mills and mines of cheap labour. He was not deterred, however, and kept the boys until they were 14 and the girls until they were 17.

The children had other duties to perform. Boys learnt to knit and darn socks, make beds, clean shoes, scrub rooms, work in the garden and run errands. The girls helped in the kitchens, sculleries, wash houses and laundries.

Diet

There was not a great deal of variation in the food, but it was wholesome and regular: porridge every morning for breakfast and meat for dinner on Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays. On Tuesdays and Sundays a dish of rice and raisins was commonplace. On Saturdays they were served broth with meat in it. Meat was either mutton - known to the children as 'Og' - or corned beef. The bread was known as 'Toke' because of the grace said at meals, 'We thank thee, Lord, for these tokens of thy love.' Fresh fruit and eggs were in plentiful supply, and milk and water was the usual drink.



Charles Dickens once visited the Orphanage upon hearing rumours of starvation. After inspection, he left wholly satisfied that the children were adequately fed. On special occasions such as Müller's birthday, they were given cake and an enormous apple dumpling to mark the anniversary. Christmas was also an occasion for special food and, one year, 150 pheasants were received from a donor in Cornwall.

The annual outing to Pur Down, a field within walking distance from the Orphanage, was a most popular event as was Christmas with its trees, decorations, presents, carols, games and parties.

No child left the Müller Homes until employment had been found for them. The boys were apprenticed to a trade and some, whose ability allowed, to teacher training. All were provided with two suits and a sum of money. The girls left at 17 and went into domestic service, nursing or teacher training. They, too, were provided with an outfit of clothes and some money. George Müller gave his blessing to every child on leaving his care and presented each with a Bible.

As one orphan recalled upon leaving, 'My belongings were my Bible, my clothes and half a crown and, best of all, was the priceless blessing of George Müller's prayers.'

There are many fine testimonies to the Müller Homes but a former Müller child, Edith Larby, sums up what many of the 18,000 children who had been through the Homes can testify,

'The greatest thing that has ever happened to me was at the Müller Homes because there I learnt about the Lord Jesus. Through the teaching that had been put into my heart as a child, I gave that same heart to the Lord one day, and I have never regretted it.'



Part 3

Muller's Mission:

200,000 Miles Of Travel



Addressing More Than 3 Million People

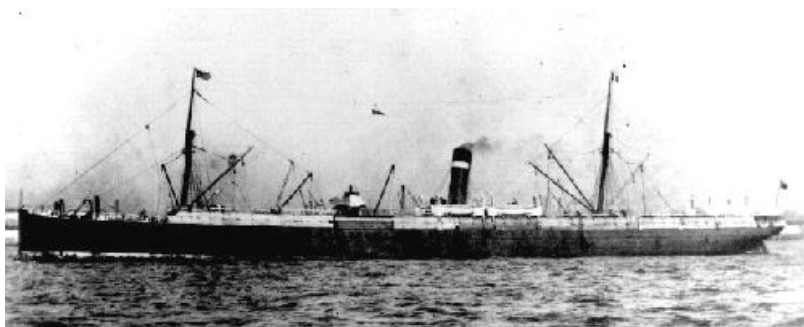
In 1875, at the age of 70, the remarkable George Müller decided to devote the next period of his life to a world-wide ministry of preaching and teaching. Long before Müller came to this decision, through much prayer, God had been preparing the way for this work. In February 1870, his wife Mary died in their fortieth year of marriage. Though Mary Müller had devoted her life to supporting George in the work at the Homes, she would not have had the physical strength for the vast amount of travel that lay ahead. George Müller's health had been robust for many years, despite his earlier ill health.

Their daughter, Lydia, married James Wright, Müller's assistant, in 1871. Together, they became more involved in the work of the Homes, which relieved him from much of the pressure and responsibility.

In 1872, Müller married Miss Susannah Sanger - a 'consistent' Christian, as he once described her - whom he had known for twenty-five years. Susannah loved to travel and made an ideal companion on the tours ahead.

From 1875 to 1892 Müller was almost constantly engaged on missionary preaching journeys. Throughout his Christian life he always set out his aims and objectives before embarking upon God's work and this new area was no exception. Müller wanted to share with a wider audience the truths he had discovered about God. Further, he desired to encourage Christians to become lovers of the Bible and test everything by the Word of God. Another of his aims was to break down the barriers of denominationalism and to promote, as he put it, 'brotherly love amongst Christians.'

During his 17 years of missionary travel he toured the United States of America four times, India twice and on three occasions toured Australia and the Colonies. In addition, George Müller preached in 42 countries, including China and Japan. By land and sea he travelled 200,000 miles, an extraordinary feat in the nineteenth century.



The 'Sardinian': a vessel Müller used for one of his journeys

Müller addressed meetings of up to 5,000 people at a time and was able to speak in English, French or German. In addition, his sermons were interpreted into as many as 18 other languages. He estimated that during this 17 year period he had addressed more than three million people.

Müller still trusted God entirely for his every financial need. Often he had to pay sums of up to £240 for his long voyages yet no-one ever knew his needs. God provided for all of them.

Prayer was Müller's answer to every problem, even when it came to influencing the forces of nature. In 1877 when the Müllers were aboard the ship 'Sardinian' bound for the United States, they ran into dense fog off the coast of Newfoundland, which severely slowed down their progress. Müller told the Captain of his need to be in Quebec the following Saturday afternoon to which the Captain replied, "That is impossible." The Captain thought Müller was mad when he suggested they should go to the chart-room and pray. When the Captain pointed out the density of the fog, George Müller replied, "My eye is not on the density of the fog, but on the living God, who controls every circumstance of my life." Müller restrained the Captain from praying because he was not a believer but after he himself had

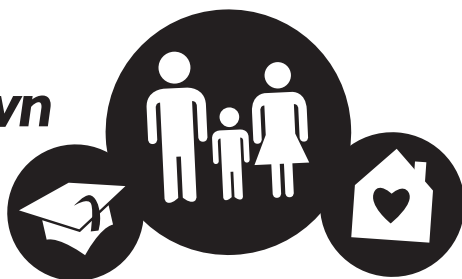
prayed, invited the Captain to open the door. The fog had lifted. This story was subsequently re-told by the Captain himself, who had since become a Christian.

It was on that same trip that the Müllers were invited to the White House to meet President and Mrs Hayes. During his seventeen years travelling, George Müller met many of the world's leaders and influential politicians.

Müller ended his travels in 1892 in his eighty-eighth year. The importance of his second wife, Susannah, had now become apparent to him. She had greatly assisted in the circulation of thousands of tracts in many different languages and had spoken privately to thousands of people about the Christian gospel. Within two years of the conclusion of the tours she died and Müller was again a widower. Four years later, Müller himself died. His funeral procession brought much of Bristol to a standstill. Here was a great man of faith whose influence had been so evident in his adopted city of Bristol, but also a man whose work and life had been a challenge to countless people worldwide.

Part 4

After Ashley Down



Family Group Care

Despite Müller's death in 1898, the Homes continued to operate in the same way with the same principles. In George Müller's day the Homes developed along institutional lines, and with the care of more than 2,000 children and some 200 members of staff, there seemed to be no other way to meet the need. Indeed very few alterations were thought to be necessary until the end of the Second World War. The introduction of the Welfare State brought about many changes in this country, and among these was the method of caring for children.



As a result of the 1948 Children Act the Trustees decided, after much prayer, to sell the five large Homes at Ashley Down. They bought, instead, smaller properties to house family groups of ten to twelve children. It was felt that this would provide the children with a more natural environment in which to grow.

It took several years to complete the change-over and eventually the five Ashley Down Homes were all purchased by the local Education Authority in 1958.

The smaller family group homes were located in various parts of Bristol, Clevedon, and Weston-Super-Mare. There was also a home in Backwell and a holiday home at Minehead. Each home had its own staff, consisting of houseparents (a married couple), two assistants and some part-time domestic help. The emphasis was no longer on formal education, but healthy, emotional and physical development. All the children now attended local state schools. Most of the children came from broken homes, many were emotionally deprived in one way or another, and a few were quite seriously disturbed. In many ways, this new approach had been vital to meet the needs. However, the basis of the Müller Homes remained the same, and it was essential for all staff involved to have the same faith in God and obedience to His will. Although the nature of the Homes had changed considerably since George Müller's time, the same basic principle of God meeting every need, through the power of prayer, was still the same.

The Beginning of Day Care and Family Support

In the late 1970s, it became apparent to the Directors and Trustees of the Homes that even family group care, as had been practised since the war, was no longer appropriate to meet the ever changing needs of society. Coupled with that was the fact that children were no longer coming into residential care in sufficient numbers; local authorities and other childcare agencies preferring that the children be fostered with private families.

After much discussion and prayer, it was felt that the way forward was, in some way, to meet the needs of whole families who, for one reason or another, were finding difficulties and pressures hard to bear.

For that reason, and with a continuing dependence on the guidance of God, a Day Care Centre was established, based at Glandore, a large period house located in a residential area of Weston-Super-Mare, which had been one of the former children's homes.

This Centre tried to create an environment where advice and practical help could be given to parents to enable them to maintain a level of family life that brought a sense of security and well-being to the whole family. This very practical help once again flowed from the commitment of the staff to follow Christ's example. Any one of three basic problems would make a child

eligible for daily care at Glandore: there was the problem of environment, where inadequate housing and limited resources for recreation put a child's health at risk or where a child of pre-school age was unable to receive the care needed, due to the ill health of a parent; the social problem, where a single parent needed to follow employment for economic reasons; and the emotional problem, which meant that the child might have been at risk physically.

The Centre could care for up to 30 children in three separate groups, each looked after by two nursery nurses. In addition to the Day Care Centre, several Family Support Centres were opened in and around the district of Bristol. A Family Support Centre differed from the Day Care Centre in that whole families could be accommodated on a daily basis.

It was (and is today) a well-known fact that family life is under attack, with the divorce rate nationally affecting one in three families; more and more children and young people being brought before the Courts for antisocial behaviour, etc. It appeared that the source of the problems lay mainly in the homes of such children, and often through no direct fault of parents. The difficulties were sometimes financial, social or perhaps a result of inappropriate environment, or illness - physical or mental, etc.

It was at this point of crisis that the staff of the Müller Homes would step in and offer support.

The Family Support Centres catered for over 200 families each week, meeting the varying levels of their needs. The results confirmed that the change of direction was according to the will of God in that a number of families committed their lives to Christ as a result of the work of the Centres. Also many others were helped with marital relationships and family problems with which they were faced.

The Beginning of Schools Work

In 1987 two Schools Workers were appointed, one on a full time basis and another on a part time basis. It was their responsibility to promote the Christian Gospel in schools in and around the City of Bristol. They endeavoured to set up Christian Union Groups and to encourage those

that already existed. They also took morning Assemblies and were invited to take Religious Education lessons within the school curriculum. They were greatly encouraged at the response from the teaching staff of local schools and had the privilege of leading several pupils to the Lord as a result of their efforts. Great things were expected of this new outreach of the work of The George Müller Charitable Trust.

The Trust is now participating in “Open the Book” as part of its Spiritual Orphans initiative to reach children who have never heard the Word of God and are unaware that the Bible is a living history book. Teams of people go into schools to help with morning assemblies, and “open the book” through music and drama.

The Challenge of the 21st Century

One of the great areas of concern for the Trustees and Directors has been finding ways of meeting the needs of children and families especially, but not exclusively, in the neediest parts of the Greater Bristol area. Coupled with that, the Trustees and Directors have sought to support local churches as they respond to the needs of children and families. Until 2003, in Bristol and Weston-Super-Mare, there were professional teams of staff seeking to provide a range of services for children and families, as well as providing support, encouragement and resources for local churches. The following type and range of activities were typical:

- Providing day care for children at a Centre
- Helping to supervise a church-based parent and toddler group, nursery or crèche
- Running a self-esteem group for children in a local primary school
- Helping and supporting parent's groups
- Teaching a Bible study for parents
- Running a children's bereavement group
- Organising a play-scheme
- Co-ordinating an anger management group for parents
- Monitoring self-help groups for parents
- Counselling
- Providing advocacy help for parents
- Helping in homes including cooking, family management skills, and

general home visiting skills

- Taking an assembly, school club or being a teacher's assistant in community based primary schools
- Running an after school's club
- Assessing community needs
- Meeting with representatives of the statutory agencies

However, after much prayer and seeking God, the Trustees felt that the most effective way of providing for children in local communities was for the Trust to work exclusively with and through local churches. Over the years, churches have become more aware of their responsibilities in and to their local communities and, in 2003, the Trustees agreed to devote the resources of the charity towards working with local churches in partnership. The remaining centres, in Weston-Super-Mare (at Cowan House) and in Southmead (at the Ullswater Family Centre), were closed, and from 2003 the primary children's work was delivered through Müller Church Partnerships.

There are many different ways in which Christian love and care may be shared, and a variety of different aspects of care are represented by the growing number of partnerships in the Greater Bristol area. Church leaders and workers are helped to focus their vision on the needs of children, churches are encouraged, inspired, equipped and trained to work amongst children, families and young people in community settings and in schools. The list of Müller Church Partnerships is growing as more and more partnerships are formed.

Similarly, the schools work had grown and developed in the light of the great expectation for it, as has been mentioned. As well as work in primary schools through the work outlined above, schools workers along with volunteer year team members, sought to provide Christian teaching and discipleship to many young people in Bristol's secondary schools. Schools work was a very exacting and challenging activity. There was, and is, much need in our schools to provide support for teachers and especially to support and resource the challenge of teaching spiritual values within the curriculum. As



this area developed, so the work that George Müller began, in pioneering provision, continued to explore new and exciting areas of work. The Trust employed schools workers and each year a Year Team sought to support the work in education and community care. Off-the-job training was given to year team members one day each week and the rest of the week was spent in an on-the-job placement. The work linked with a number of other projects involved with young people. A key area of schools work for us was working with youngsters disaffected with school - challenging but very rewarding work.

Nowadays all the schools work is delivered through Müller Church Partnerships and the year team training has been replaced by a large and successful nationally validated training programme, which is of significant help to local churches and organisations in the provision of off-the-job training.

This exciting area of work with local churches is still developing, but the Trustees feel that the support, dissemination of good practice, networking of ideas and resources, encouragement, mutual working, effective and quality training are all part of the challenge of the Trust as it comes to grips with the needs of children, families and young people at the beginning of the 21st Century.

Homes For The Elderly

The Müller Trust for Children and the Scriptural Knowledge Institution were two separate and distinct Charities, administered from the same office at Müller House. In 1983 a third Charity was added to the work of the Müller Homes, known as The Müller Homes for the Elderly.

As with the children and family care work, the Directors and Trustees had been praying for some time about helping to meet the needs of the elderly. This became a reality with the opening of the first Home, known as Tilsley House, in Weston-Super-Mare.

The Home was registered as an elderly persons' residential care home for 30 persons. In addition, when a neighbouring property became available for purchase, having prayed about extending the work, the Directors and Trustees purchased the property and converted it into a number of



sheltered accommodation flats under the supervision of a Warden. In 2010, Tilsley House was sold to a new provider on the understanding that its Christian ethos would be maintained. The sale was due to the social and regulatory changes affecting the elderly and the provision for their care. Tranquil House's sheltered accommodation next-door was sold in 2012, and the Trustees and Directors continue to seek the Lord's direction for how best to meet the needs of the elderly today, especially when most continue to live in their own homes.

Christian Literature

George Müller was a staunch believer in the power of Christian literature. With the setting up of SKI in 1834, Müller became committed to the distribution of Bibles and tracts, not only in English but also in other languages. In that same year he founded a Bible Warehouse and Bookshop in Bristol and, as the need increased, it became necessary for this part of George Müller's work to be moved to separate premises.

Therefore, in 1852, the Bible and Tract Warehouse and Bookshop was opened in Park Street, Bristol. The work carried on from these premises for nearly ninety years until the Second World War, when the shop was destroyed by fire. The work was then transferred temporarily to other premises. These were in an area of Bristol that was away from the mainstream of city life, and therefore the shop, for many years, occupied an unimportant role. After much prayer and waiting upon God, a new building was purchased in Park Street near the original site.

This shop was opened in 1957, under the title “Evangelical Christian Literature”.

Subsequently, two other branches were opened in Bath (in 1974), and in Weston-Super-Mare (1984); this was yet another example of the faithfulness of God. The shops carried a wide range of Christian books and other literature, and every need was catered for, from the general reader to the serious student. The fourth object of SKI is, ‘To aid in supplying the wants of Missionaries and Missionary Schools’. A proportion of the profits from the bookshops were sent to support missionaries in other countries and provided Bibles for people in countries where they are in short supply. As a result of the increasing sophistication of the Christian book selling market, it was decided in the early 1990s to sell the shops to other Christian booksellers; the business in Bath was sold to Scripture Union and the businesses in Bristol and Weston-Super-Mare to an arm of Operation Mobilisation, “Send the Light”. STL then took over the SU bookshops and all three traded under the name “Wesley Owen Books and Music”. The Wesley Owen bookshops are no longer trading following a decline in trade due to the rising popularity of online booksellers.

Part 5

Müllers Today



The George Muller Charitable Trust, affectionately named Müllers by those who support the work, continues to work with organisations and individuals locally and around the world, partnering in the gospel, bringing prayer and care together to transform lives and shape communities through holistic care.

Working Globally

Partnering in the Gospel to create strong prayer and practical links as our global partners' work among orphans, needy children, the elderly and widows.

The missionary work of SKI continues today with the same clear objectives put forward by George Müller and Henry Craik in 1834. Müllers is now expanding its work in this area with two new initiatives: Orphans of the World and Widows of the World.

Orphans of the World includes prayer and funding partnerships with those Christian workers and care projects, with whom we have an existing relationship, whose ministry is to bring care to orphans. The Trust adds a percentage of the gifts designated for those workers and projects by individuals and partnership churches to those gifts from its own funds. The Trust, in seeking to touch the lives of orphans and needy children, also



partners with four organisations to make small loans to the poor in third world countries to enable them to establish a cottage industry and work their way out of poverty. The Trust aims to invest a total of £1million in these small loans by 2016.

Widows of the World includes prayer and funding partnerships to those Christian workers and care projects, with whom we have an existing relationship, whose ministry is to bring care to widows and the elderly. The Trust sends a regular sum, from its own funds, to those ministries.

Working Regionally

Growing a network of local Müller Partnerships that reach out to needy children, families and seniors in their local communities. Partnering with them in the gospel to reach a whole generation of local un-churched children and young people, and reach out to support 3rd Agers and seniors.

These networks evolved from the Day Care and Family Centres which had developed from the smaller scattered homes which had evolved from the large institutional residential care of the Ashley Down Homes.



Working Centrally

Prayerfully resourcing the work of Müllers through welcoming visitors to the Museum at the charity head office, inspiring local school parties and visitors from different countries, responding to family history requests, and running the Practical Theology course held at Müller House.

Continuing Contact with ‘Old Boys and Girls’

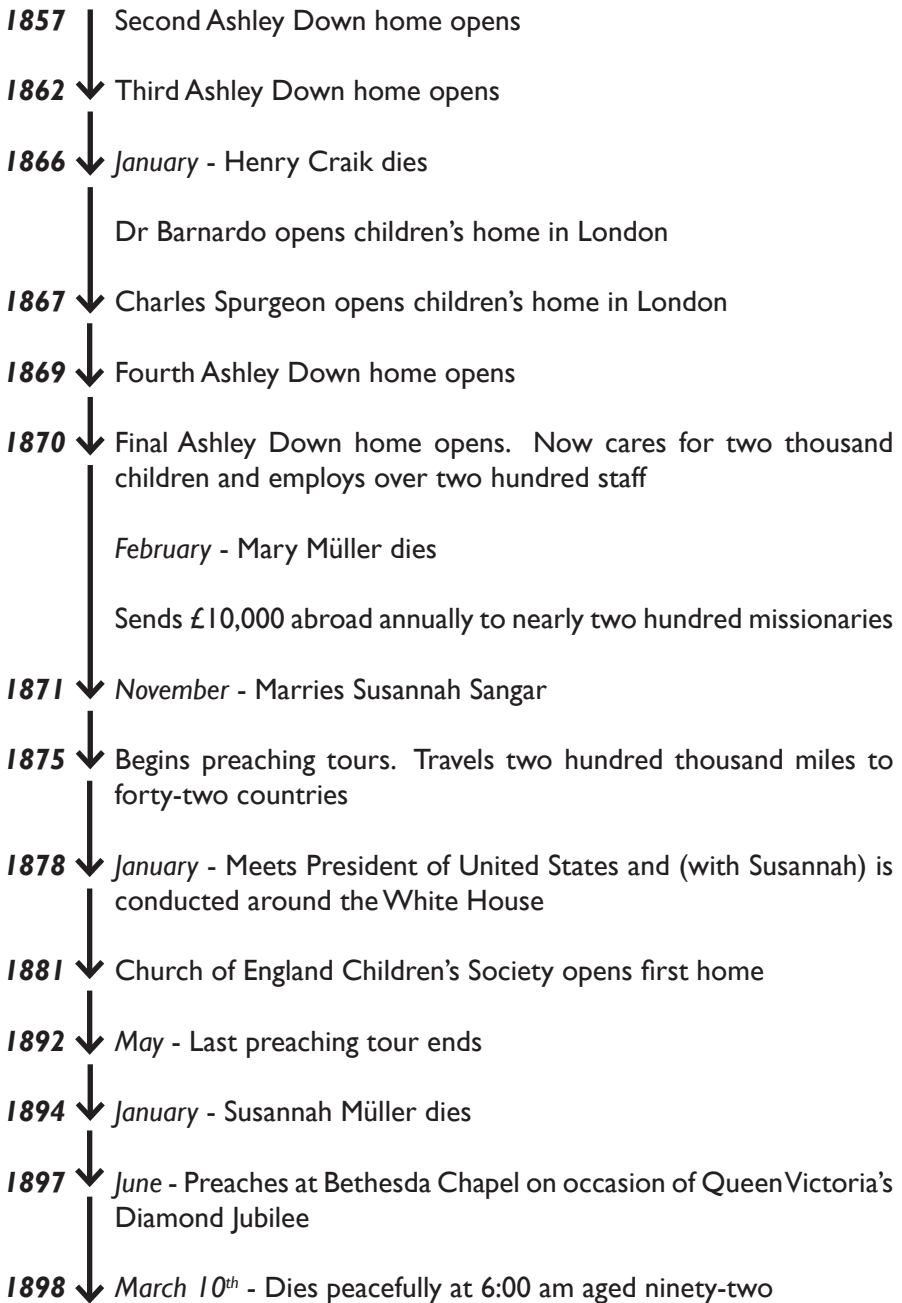
In the 1970s, a Müller Fellowship was formed in Bristol by old boys and girls who felt called to meet regularly and to pray for their former “family members” who had gone away from the Lord or who never received Him in the first place. Mr Müller regularly prayed for children long after they had left the Homes, trusting in the Lord to answer each and every prayer in His own way and time. The Müller Fellowship organised an annual reunion to provide a focus for Old Boys and Girls. In addition, since the original records of most of the Old Boys and Girls are still available, dating back to 1836, we keep in touch with many who want to see their records or with the families of those now deceased. The Trust has a brisk demand for access to this important material.



Unfortunately, due to the advancing age of the Müller Fellowship committee members, the reunions finished in 2006 but the Trust runs annual Open Days to provide a continuing forum for former residents to meet and share together, revive friendships and make new ones.

A Timeline of George Müller's Life

- 1805** ○ September 27th - Born Kroppenstaedt, Prussia
- 1825** ↓ November - Becomes a Christian following a visit to a small house meeting
- 1829** ↓ March - Arrives in London to train with the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews (now the Church Mission to the Jews)
- Summer - Convalescence in Teignmouth, Devon. Meets Henry Craik and becomes associated with founders of Brethren movement
- 1830** ↓ January - Ends association with London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews
- May - Falls ill, believes he is dying
- August - Marries Mary Groves (sister of Anthony Norris Groves) in Exeter
- Becomes pastor of Ebenezer Chapel in Teignmouth
- 1832** ↓ May - Müller and Henry Craik accept an invitation to become pastors of Gideon Chapel in Bristol
- 1834** ↓ Establishes Scriptural Knowledge Institution for Home and Abroad
- 1836** ↓ April - Opens first children's home in Wilson Street, Bristol, for thirty children. Subsequently opens three further homes in same street
- 1849** ↓ June - Opens new purpose-built home in Ashley Down, Bristol, for three hundred children



For More Information

The Trust holds substantial stocks of books, DVDs and videos concerning the work and also a large amount of records, photographs and other items concerning the Homes. An increasing number of enquiries are being received for copies of records concerning “Old Boys and Girls”.

There is a museum, which is open from 10am to 4pm Monday to Friday, except Bank Holidays, when we will be very happy to welcome visitors by prior appointment. A Report is published each year, which contains a continuing testimony of the faithfulness of God.

If you would like further information, please contact us:



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Müllers

“...he called a public meeting with a view to opening an Orphan home. This was a complete step in faith and four days before the meeting, God confirmed that step through the Scripture - ‘Open wide your mouth and I will fill it’ (Psalm 81:10).”

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