

~Other Speakers M-R: A.T. Pierson:

DEATH shuts the door upon earthly service, whatever door it may open to other forms and spheres of activity. There are many intimations that service beyond the grave is both unceasing and untiring: the blessed dead "rest indeed from their labours"-- toilsome and painful tasks-- "but their work's" activities for God-- "do follow them," where exertion is without exhaustion.

This is therefore a fit point for summing up the results of the work over which, from its beginning, one man had specially had charge. One sentence from Mr. M^Aller's pen marks the purpose which was the very pivot of his whole being:

"I have joyfully dedicated my whole life to the object of exemplifying how much may be accomplished by prayer and faith."

This prepared both for the development of the character of him who had such singleness of aim, and for the development of the work in which that aim found action. Mr. M^Aller's oldest friend, Robert C. Chapman of Barnstable, beautifully says that

"when a man's chief business is to serve and please the Lord, all his circumstances become his servants";

and we shall find this maxim true in Mr. M^Aller's life-work.

The Fifty-ninth Report, issued May 26, 1898, was the last up to the date of the publication of this volume, and the first after Mr. M^Aller's death. In this, Mr. Wright gives the brief but valuable summary not only of the whole work of the year preceding, but of the whole work from its beginning, and thus helps us to a comprehensive survey.

This report is doubly precious as it contains also the last contribution of Mr. M^Aller's own pen to the record of the Lord's dealings. It is probable that on the afternoon of March 9th he laid down his pen, for the last time, all unconscious that he was never again to take it up. He had made, in a twofold sense, his closing entry in life's solemn journal! In the evening of that day he took his customary part in the prayer service in the orphan house-- then went to sleep for the last time on earth; there came a waking hour, when he was alone with God, and suddenly departed, leaving his body to its long sleep that knows no waking until the day of the Lord's coming, while his spirit returned unto God who gave it.

The afternoon of that day of death, and of "birth" into the heavenly life-- as the catacomb saints called it-- found the helpers again assembled in the same prayer room to commit the work to him "who only hath immortality," and who, amid all changes of human administration, ever remains the divine Master Workman, never at a loss for His own chosen instruments.

Mr. Wright, in this report, shows himself God's chosen in the work, evidently like-minded with the departed director. The first paragraph, after the brief and touching reference to his father-in-law, serves to convey to all friends of this work the assurance that he to whom Mr. M^Aller left its conduct has also learned the one secret of all success in coworking with God. It sounds, as the significant keynote for the future, the same old keynote of the past, carrying on the melody and harmony, without change, into the new measures. It is the same oratorio, without alteration of theme, time, or even key: the leading performer is indeed no more but another hand takes up his instrument and, trembling with emotion, continues the unfinished strain so that there is no interruption. Mr. Wright says:

"It is written (Job xxvi.7):

'He hangeth the earth upon nothing'--

that is, no visible support. And so we exult in the fact that 'the Scriptural Knowledge Institution for Home and Abroad' hangs, as it has ever hung, since its commencement, now more than sixty-four years ago, 'upon nothing,' that is, upon no VISIBLE support. It hangs upon no human patron, upon no endowment or funded property, but solely upon the good pleasure of the blessed God."

Blessed lesson to learn! that to hang upon the invisible God is not to hang "upon nothing," though it be upon nothing visible. The power and permanence of the invisible forces that hold up the earth after sixty centuries of

human history are sufficiently shown by the fact that this great globe still swings securely in space and is whirled through its vast orbit, and that, without variation of a second, it still moves with divine exactness in its appointed path. We can therefore trust the same invisible God to sustain with His unseen power all the work which faith depends upon His truth and love and unfailing word of promise, though to the natural eye all these may seem as nothing.

Mr. Wright records also a very striking answer to long-continued prayer, and a most impressive instance of the tender care of the Lord, in the providing of an associate, every way like-minded, and well fitted to share the responsibility falling upon his shoulders at the decease of his father-in-law.

Feeling the burden too great for him, his one resource was to cast his burden on the Lord. He and Mr. M¹/₄ller had asked of God such a companion in labour for three years before his departure, and Mr. Wright and his dear wife had, for twenty-five years before that-- from the time when Mr. M¹/₄ller's long missionary tours began to withdraw him from Bristol-- besought of the Lord the same favour. But to none of them had any name been suggested, or, if so, it had never been mentioned.

After that day of death, Mr. Wright felt that a gracious Father would not long leave him to sustain this great burden alone, and about a fortnight later he felt assured that it was the will of God that he should ask Mr. George Frederic Bergin to join him in the work, who seemed to him a "true yoke-fellow." He had known him well for a quarter-century; he had worked by his side in the church; and though they were diverse in temperament, there had never been a break in unity or sympathy. Mr. Bergin was seventeen years his junior, and so likely to survive and succeed him; he was very fond of children, and had been much blessed in training his own in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and hence was fitted to take charge of this larger family of orphans. Confident of being led of God, he put the matter before Mr. Bergin, delighted but not surprised to find that the same God had moved on his mind also, and in the same direction; for not only was he ready to respond to Mr. Wright's appeal, but he had been led of God to feel that he should, after a certain time, go to Mr. Wright and offer himself. The Spirit who guided Philip to the Eunuch and at the same time had made the Eunuch to inquire after guidance; who sent men from Cornelius and, while they were knocking at Simon's house, was bidding Peter go with them, still moves in a mysterious way, and simultaneously, on those whom He would bring together for cooperation in loving service. And thus Mr. Wright found the Living God the same Helper and Supplier of every need, after his beloved father-in-law had gone up higher; and felt constrained to feel that the God of Elijah was still at the crossing of the Jordan and could work the same wonders as before, supplying the need of the hour when the need came.

Mr. M¹/₄ller's own gifts to the service of the Lord find in this posthumous report their first full record and recognition. Readers of the Annual Reports must have noticed an entry, recurring with strange frequency during all these thirty or forty years, and therefore suggesting a giver that must have reached a very ripe age:

"from a servant of the Lord Jesus, who, constrained by the love of Christ, seeks to lay up treasure in heaven."

If that entry be carefully followed throughout and there be added the personal gifts made by Mr. M¹/₄ller to various benevolent objects, it will be found that the aggregate sum from this "servant" reaches, up to March 1, 1898, a total of eighty-one thousand four hundred and ninety pounds eighteen shillings and eightpence. Mr. Wright, now that this "servant of the Lord Jesus" is with his Master, who promised,

"Where I am there shall also My servant be,"

feels free to make known that this donor was no other than George M¹/₄ller himself who thus gave out of his own money-- money given to him for his own use or left to him by legacies-- the total sum of about sixty-four thousand five hundred pounds to the Scriptural Knowledge Institution, and, in other directions, seventeen thousand more.

This is a record of personal gifts to which we know no parallel. It reminds us of the career of John Wesley, whose simplicity and frugality of habits enabled him not only to limit his own expenditure to a very small sum, but whose Christian liberality and unselfishness prompted him to give all that he could thus save to purely benevolent objects. While he had but thirty pounds a year, he lived on twenty-eight and gave away forty shillings. Receiving twice as much the next year, he still kept his living expenses down to the twenty-eight pounds and had thirty-two to bestow on the needy; and when the third year his income rose to ninety pounds, he spent no more than before and gave away sixty-two. The fourth year brought one hundred and twenty, and he disbursed still but the same sum for his own needs, having ninety-two to spare. It is calculated that in the course of his life he thus gave away at least thirty thousand pounds, and four silver spoons comprised all the

silver plate that he possessed when the collectors of taxes called upon him. Such economy on the one hand and such generosity on the other have seldom been known in human history.

But George M^lller's record will compare favourably with this or any other of modern days. His frugality, simplicity, and economy were equal to Wesley's, and his gifts aggregated eighty-one thousand pounds. Mr. M^lller had received increasingly large sums from the Lord which he invested well and most profitably, so that for over sixty years he never lost a penny through a bad speculation! But his investments were not in lands or banks or railways, but in the work of God. He made friends out of the mammon of unrighteousness that when he failed received him into everlasting habitations.

He continued, year after year, to make provision for himself, his beloved wife and daughter, by laying up treasure-- in heaven. Such a man had certainly a right to exhort others to systematic beneficence. He gave-- as not one in a million gives-- not a tithe, not any fixed proportion of annual income, but all that was left after the simplest and most necessary supply of actual wants. While most Christians regard themselves as doing their duty if, after they have given a portion to the Lord, they spend all the rest on themselves, God led George M^lller to reverse this rule and reserve only the most frugal sum for personal needs, that the entire remainder might be given to him that needeth. The utter revolution implied in our habits of giving which would be necessary were such a rule adopted is but too obvious. Mr. M^lller's own words are:

"My aim never was, how much I could obtain, but rather how much I could give."

He kept continually before him his stewardship of God's property; and sought to make the most of the one brief life on earth, and to use for the best and largest good the property held by him in trust. The things of God were deep realities, and, projecting every action and decision and motive into the light of the judgment-seat of Christ, he asked himself how it would appear to him in the light of that tribunal. Thus he sought prayerfully and conscientiously so to live and labor, so to deny himself, and, by love, serve God and man, as that he should not be ashamed before Him at His coming. But not in a spirit of fear was this done; for if any man of his generation knew the perfect love that casts out fear, it was George M^lller. He felt that God is love, and love is of God. He saw that love manifested in the greatest of gifts-- His only-begotten Son at Calvary-- he knew and believed the Love that God hath to us; he received it into his own heart; it became an abiding presence, manifested in obedience and benevolence, and, subduing him more and more, it became perfected so as to expel tormenting fear and impart a holy confidence and delight in God.

Among the texts which strongly impressed and moulded Mr. M^lller's habits of giving was Luke vi.38:

"Give and it shall be given unto you.
Good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over
shall men give into your bosom."

He believed this promise and he verified it. His testimony is:

"I had GIVEN, and God had caused to be GIVEN TO ME AGAIN, and bountifully."

Again he read:

"It is more blessed to give than to receive."

He says that he BELIEVED what he found in the word of God, and by His grace sought to ACT ACCORDINGLY, and thus again records that he was blessed abundantly and his peace and joy in the Holy Ghost increased more and more.

It will not be a surprise, therefore, that, as has been already noted, Mr. M^lller's entire personal estate at his death, as sworn to, when the will was admitted to probate, was only £169 9s. 4d., of which books, household furniture, etc., were reckoned at over one hundred pounds, the only money in his possession being a trifle over sixty pounds, and even this only awaiting disbursement as God's steward.

The will of Mr. M^lller contains a pregnant clause which should not be forgotten in this memorial. It closes with a paragraph which is deeply significant as meant to be his posthumous word of testimony "a last testament":

"I cannot help admiring God's wondrous grace in bringing me to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus when I was

an entirely careless and thoughtless young man, and that He has kept me in His fear and truth, allowing me the great honour, for so long a time, of serving Him."

In the comprehensive summary contained in this Fifty-ninth Report, remarkable growth is apparent during the sixty-four years since the outset of the work in 1834.

During the year ending May 26, 1898,

the number of day-schools was 7, and of pupils, 354; the number of children in attendance from the beginning, 81,501.

The number of home Sunday-schools, 12, and of children in them, 1,341; but from the beginning, 32,944.

The number of Sunday-schools aided in England and Wales, 25.

The amount expended in connection with home schools, £736 13s. 10d.; from the outset, £109,992 19s. 10d.

The Bibles and parts thereof circulated, 15,411; from the beginning, 1,989,266. Money expended for this purpose the past year, £439; from the first, £41,090 13s. 3d.

Missionary labourers aided, 115. Money expended, £2082 9s. 6d.; from the outset, £261,859 7s. 4d.

Circulation of books and tracts, 3,101,338. Money spent, £1001 3s.; and from the first, £47,188 11s. 10d.

The number of orphans on Ashley Down, 1620; and from the first, 10,024. Money spent in orphan houses, last year £22,523 13s. 1d.; and from the beginning, £988,829.

To carry out conviction into action is sometimes a costly sacrifice; but whatever Mr. M^{rs} Miller's fidelity to conviction cost in one way, he had stupendous results of his life-work to contemplate, even while he lived. Let any one look at the above figures and facts, and remember that here was one poor man who, dependent on the help of God only in answer to prayer, could look back over threescore years and see how he had built five large orphan houses and taken into his family over ten thousand orphans, expending, for their good, within twelve thousand pounds of a round million. He had given aid to day-schools and Sunday-schools, in this and other lands, where nearly one hundred and fifty thousand children have been taught, at a cost of over one hundred and ten thousand pounds more. He had circulated nearly two million Bibles and parts thereof at the cost of over forty thousand pounds; and over three million books and tracts, at a cost of nearly fifty thousand pounds more. And besides all this he had spent over two hundred and sixty thousand pounds to aid missionary labourers in various lands. The sum total of the money thus spent during sixty years has thus reached very nearly the astonishing aggregate of one and a half million of pounds sterling (\$7,500,000).

To summarize Mr. M^{rs} Miller's service we must understand his great secret. Such a life and such a work are the result of one habit more than all else,-- daily and frequent communion with God. Unwearied in supplications and intercessions, we have seen how, in every new need and crisis, prayer was the one resort, the prayer of faith.

He first satisfied himself that he was in the way of duty;

then he fixed his mind upon the unchanging word of promise;

then, in the boldness of a suppliant who comes to a throne of grace in the name of Jesus Christ and pleads the assurance of the immutable Promiser, he presented every petition.

He was an unwearied intercessor. No delay discouraged him. This is seen particularly in the case of individuals for whose conversion or special guidance into the paths of full obedience he prayed. On his prayer list were the names of some for whom he had besought God, daily, by name, for one, two, three, four, six, ten years before the answer was given. The year just before his death, he told the writer of two parties for whose reconciliation to God he had prayed, day by day, for over sixty years, and who had not as yet to his knowledge turned unto God: and he significantly added,

"I have not a doubt that I shall meet them both in heaven; for my Heavenly Father would not lay upon my heart a burden of prayer for them for over threescore years, if He had not concerning them purposes of mercy."

This is a sufficient example of his almost unparalleled perseverance and importunity in intercession. However long the delay, he held on, as with both hands clasping the very horns of the altar; and his childlike spirit reasoned simply but confidently, that the very fact of his own spirit being so long drawn out in prayer for one object, and of the Lord's enabling him so to continue patiently and believably to wait on Him for the blessing, was a promise and prophecy of the answer; and so he waited on, so assured of the ultimate result that he praised God in advance, believing that he had practically received that for which he asked.

It is most helpful here to add that one of the parties for whom for so many years he unceasingly prayed had recently died in faith, having received the promises and embraced them and confessed Jesus as his Lord. Just before leaving Bristol with this completed manuscript of Mr. M^ller's life, I met a lady, a niece of the man referred to, through whom I received a knowledge of these facts. He had, before his departure, given most unequivocal testimony to his faith and hope in the Saviour of sinners.

If George M^ller could still speak to us, he would again repeat the warning so frequently found in his journal and reports, that his fellow disciples must not regard him as a miracle-worker, as though his experience were to be accounted so exceptional as to have little application in our ordinary spheres of life and service. With patient repetition he affirms that in all essentials such an experience is the privilege of all believers. God calls disciples to various forms of work, but all alike to the same faith. To say, therefore,

"I am not called to build orphan houses, etc., and have no right to expect answers to my prayers as Mr. M^ller did,"

is wrong and unbelieving. Every child of God, he maintained, is first to get into the sphere appointed of God, and therein to exercise full trust, and live by faith upon God's sure word of promise.

Throughout all these thousands of pages written by his pen, he teaches that every experience of God's faithfulness is both the reward of past faith and prayer, and the preparation of the servant of God for larger work and more efficient service and more convincing witness to his Lord.

No man can understand such a work who does not see in it the supernatural power of God. Without that the enigma defies solution; with that all the mystery is at least an open mystery. He himself felt from first to last that this supernatural factor was the key to the whole work, and without that it would have been even to himself a problem inexplicable. How pathetically we find him often comparing himself and his work for God to "the Burning Bush in the Wilderness" which, always aflame and always threatened with apparent destruction, was not consumed, so that not a few turned aside wondering to see this great sight. And why was it not burnt? Because Jehovah of hosts, who was in the Bush, dwelt in the man and in his work: or, as Wesley said with almost his last breath,

"Best of all, God is with us."

This simile of the Burning Bush is the more apt when we consider the rapid growth of the work. At first so very small as to seem almost insignificant, and conducted in one small rented house, accommodating thirty orphans, then enlarged until other rented premises became necessary; then one, two, three, four, and even five immense structures being built, until three hundred, seven hundred, eleven hundred and fifty, and finally two thousand and fifty inmates could find shelter within them,— how seldom has the world seen such vast and, at the same time, rapid enlargement! Then look at the outlay! At first a trifling expenditure of perhaps five hundred pounds for the first year of the Scriptural Knowledge Institution, and of five hundred pounds for the first twelve months of the orphan work, and in the last year of Mr. M^ller's life a grand total of over twenty-seven thousand five hundred, for all the purposes of the Institution.

The cost of the houses built on Ashley Down might have staggered a man of large capital, but this poor man only cried and the Lord helped him. The first house cost fifteen thousand pounds; the second, over twenty-one thousand; the third, over twenty-three thousand; and the fourth and fifth, from fifty thousand to sixty thousand more— so that the total cost reached about one hundred and fifteen thousand. Besides all this, there was a yearly expenditure which rose as high as twenty-five thousand for the orphans alone, irrespective of those occasional outlays made needful for emergencies, such as improved sanitary precautions, which in one case cost over two thousand pounds.

Here is a burning bush indeed, always in seeming danger of being consumed, yet still standing on Ashley Down, and still preserved because the same presence of Jehovah burns in it. Not a branch of this many-sided work has utterly perished, while the whole bush still challenges unbelievers to turn aside and see the great

sight, and take off the shoes from their feet as on holy ground where God manifests Himself.

Any complete survey of this great life-work must include much that was wholly outside of the Scriptural Knowledge Institution; such as that service which Mr. M¹ller was permitted to render to the church of Christ and the world at large as a preacher, pastor, witness for truth, and author of books and tracts.

His preaching period covered the whole time from 1826 to 1898, the year of his departure, over seventy years; and from 1830, when he went to Teignmouth, his preaching continued, without interruption except from ill health until his life closed, with an average through the whole period of probably three sermons a week, or over ten thousand, for his lifetime. This is probably a low estimate, for during his missionary tours, which covered over two hundred thousand miles and were spread through seventeen years, he spoke on an average about once a day notwithstanding already advanced age.

His church life was much blessed even in visible and tangible results. During the first two and a half years of work in Bristol, two hundred and twenty-seven members were added, about half of whom were new converts, and it is probable that, if the whole number brought to the knowledge of Christ by his preaching could now be ascertained, it would be found to aggregate full as many as the average of those years, and would thus reach into the thousands, exclusive of orphans converted on Ashley Down. Then when we take into account the vast numbers addressed and impressed by his addresses, given in all parts of the United Kingdom, on the Continent of Europe, and in America, Asia, and Australia, and the still vaster numbers who have read his Narrative, his books and tracts, or who have in various other ways felt the quickening power of his example and life, we shall get some conception-- still, at best, inadequate-- of the range and scope of the influence he wielded by his tongue and pen, his labours, and his life. Much of the best influence defies all tabulated statistics and evades all mathematical estimates; it is like the fragrance of the alabaster flask which fills all the house but escapes our grosser senses of sight, hearing, and touch. This part of George M¹ller's work we cannot summarize: it belongs to a realm where we cannot penetrate. But God sees, knows, and rewards it.