

The Wicket Gate Magazine

A Continuing Witness



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At the Web Site of the Wicket Gate magazine www.wicketgate.co.uk you will also find the following recordings:

- Through the Bible with the Children – Bible Stories told by Mr Seaton.
- Congregational Praise – the singing of our Church during Worship Services
- Sermons preached by Dr N. Needham, W. J. Seaton, and Pastor G. S. Marley
- Historical Lectures given in the Church by Dr Needham
- Podcasts on Various Subjects
- Archive of Audio Sermons.

The Ladder of God's Redeemed.

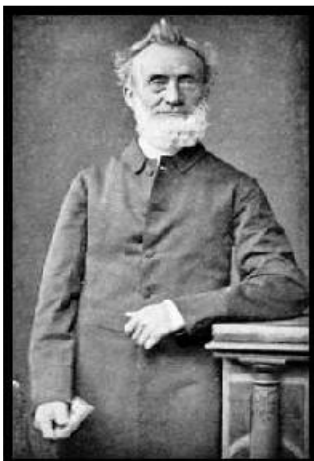
By

W. J. Seaton (1983)

Dear Friends,

In the last edition of the Wicket Gate, we began with an article on George Muller and the work of his orphanages at Ashley Down.

It was our intention on writing that article to carry it on in this edition with a short account of Muller's young life prior to his conversion, and the work of grace that then took place in his life under the hand of God. An incident in our own Church's life over recent days has a measure of coincidence with both intentions. It involves the passing of one of the church's members Mrs Edyth Sargent, and it was a privilege, under the Lord, to conduct the funeral service for our sister, and to rest in that blessed hope that it is well with her soul for ever and ever. Mrs Sargent was one of the early members of the Church and at the time of her death was the oldest member as far as "length of days" is concerned. She was heading towards her ninety-ninth year, and up until some years ago was always "in her place" at the means of grace.



Amongst Mrs Sargent's favourite recollections was the remembrance of the visits that "Mr Muller" used to pay to her father, who was the proprietor of a newspaper in South Wales, where she was born and reared. That Mr Muller, of course, was none other than George Muller himself, because by the time George Muller died,

in 1898, our dear old friend Mrs Sargent was already a young lady of thirteen years of age, having been born in 1885! She remembered “the tall, gaunt, figure in the black frock coat, something like the pictures of Abraham Lincoln,” that she had seen in her childhood. Another recollection was the day that the news arrived in her home that “the great Mr Spurgeon had gone home to be with the Lord.” That was in 1892, of course, when our aged sister was then seven years old, with many, many years lying before her in the will and purposed of God.

Now such events help to establish that blessed continuity that we can enjoy with “those whose rest is won.” History in and off itself, can be a fairly arid thing, but for the people of God, it is always a blessed thing to trace the links of grace that stretch back through the redeemed in all generations. You find the psalmists doing that kind of thing; you find it in the prophets, as well, especially when they want to remind the people, or themselves, that they are in the same hand of God that enveloped those of former times in the cause of His truth. Habakkuk does it when he begins to call upon the Lord to “revive” his work in the midst of the years. He goes away back over a period of something like six or seven-hundred years, but with a few deft strokes of his pen, he traces out a set of landmarks to show to himself and the people that their God can still deliver, can still act, can still revive – as He did, time and time again in those days gone-by.

And so, it is always good to trace the Ladder of God’s redeemed; or the family tree of God’s redeemed, perhaps. And when we do so, it can be an amazing thing to discover how we can so often place our hand in the hand of another, that was placed in another hand of those days that have gone before. It’s not such a long journey after all from ourselves to Mr Spurgeon

– or from Spurgeon to the men and women of the Awakening – and from them to the Puritans – and from the Puritans to the Reformation. And when we’ve gone back that far, then we may as well take the whole trip and link up with Paul, and Peter and the rest – right back to Abraham himself, and beyond. In that way, of course, we will also come to a better appreciation of the “actuality” of those people’s lives. They are not just names on the pages of the Word of God, but they are our brethren and sisters in the faith; fellow-workers and fellow-labourers, who really did those things and spoke of those things before us.

It is a precious exercise, and one worth following in our Christian experience.

Can I just say one other thing with regards to the account of George Muller’s early life which is covered by another article in this magazine “George Muller – From Birth to New Birth.” What a vivid reminder it ought to be to us that God is a sovereign God in all His acts of salvation and providence; that the human heart, indeed, never changes; that “juvenile delinquency” is not something that is confined to this age; but that God is over all, and to Him we must look in all things to the praise of His name.

The Lord make us diligent, so that when it comes our time to leave this world, we might be able to do it with the testimony that we have endeavoured to serve our day and generation.

Yours sincerely,
W. J. Seaton (1983)



Gleanings in the Psalms

Psalm 103 (Concluded)

Verses 13-14. “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.” To those who truly reverence his holy name, the Lord is a father and acts as such. These he pities for in the very best of men the Lord sees much to pity, and when they are at their best state, they still need his compassion. Fathers feel for their children especially when they are in pain, they would like to suffer in their stead, their sighs, and groans cut them to the quick: thus, sensitive towards us is our Heavenly Father. We do not adore a god of stone, but the living God who is tenderness itself. His pity never fails to flow, and we never cease to need it. “*He knoweth our frame.*” He knows how we are made, for he made us. Our make and build, our constitution and temperament, our prevailing infirmity, and most besetting temptation he well perceives, for he searches our inmost nature. “*He remembereth that we are dust.*” Made of dust, dust still, and ready to return to dust. We have sometimes heard of “the Iron Duke,” and of Iron constitutions, but the words are soon belied, for the Iron Duke is dissolved, and other men of like vigour are following to the grave, where “dust to dust” is an appropriate requiem.

Charles Hadden Spurgeon

Verse 17. “But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children’s children.” The “pity” that the heavenly Father exercises towards His children is nowhere more clearly realised

than in His mercy towards them. It is the mercy of God that determines the whole turning point for us from our lost condition to our state in grace and glory. By nature, we are dead in trespasses and sins, and the children of wrath, even as others; “But God,” says Paul, “who is rich in mercy;” and on that the whole tables swings round. No wonder Matthew Henry saw in the prodigal’s father a vivid picture of the heavenly Father going out to meet the returning sinner: - “His father saw him: there were *eyes* of mercy. He ran to meet him; there were *legs* of mercy. He put his arms round his neck; there were *arms* of mercy. He kissed him; there were *kisses* of mercy. He said to him; there were *words* of mercy. Bring hither the best robe; there were *deeds* of mercy. And put it on; there were *wonders* of mercy. All mercy! Oh, what a God of mercy He is.”

Verse 17. “But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting ...” *From* everlasting, by predestination: *to* everlasting, by glorification. The one without beginning, the other without end.

Bernard

Verse 22. “Bless the Lord, all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the Lord, O my soul.” We are very much struck by this sudden transition from “all his works in all places of his dominion” to the psalmist himself, a solitary individual. Of course, he had already included himself; he had included himself when he had summoned all God’s works in all places of his dominion to bless the Lord. But it seems as if a sudden fear had seized him – the fear of the possibility of omitting himself, or, the consciousness that in summoning others to praise and bless God, he must not forget himself. The activity of calling others must not make him sluggish in the duty or ready to take it for granted that he might not be neglectful in that very thing that

he was pressing on others. And we have a great subject of discourse here. Solomon has said, “They make me the keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept.” Alas! How possible, how easy to take pains for others, and to be neglectful of one’s self. But let the pains that we take for others be the reason by which we persuade ourselves. How important that, if with the psalmist, we call on all God’s works in all places of his dominions to bless the Lord; how important, I say, that we add to that call – like persons bent on self-examination and fearful of self-deceit. – “Bless the Lord *O my soul.*”

From Henry Melvill

And so, the psalmist finishes as he began:-

“O bless the Lord, all ye his works,
Wherewith the world is stored;
In his dominions everywhere,
My soul, bless thou the Lord.”

George Muller:

From Birth to New Birth

George Muller was born in Prussia in the year 1805. His father was the official collector of excise duties, and the early life of the young George Muller serves to display the depravity of human nature, on the one hand, and the sovereignty of God, on the other. “George Muller,” his biographer says, “had no proper parental training. His father’s favouritism towards him was harmful both to himself and his brother, as in the family of Jacob, tending to jealousy and estrangement. Money was put too freely into the hands of these boys, hoping that they might learn how to use it and save it; but the result was careless and vicious

waste, for it became the source of many childish sins of indulgence. Worse still, when called upon to render any account of their stewardship, sins of lying and deception were used to cloak wasteful spending. Young George systematically deceived his father, either by false entries of what he had received, or by false statements of what he had spent or had in hand. When his tricks were found out, the punishment which followed led to no reformation, the only effect being more ingenious devices of trickery or fraud. Like the Spartan lad, George Muller reckoned it no fault to steal, but only to have his theft found out.” At this point, he was around eight years old, and his biography then takes us on various steps of his career along these lines.

“Before he was ten years old,” we are told, “he was a habitual thief and an expert at cheating; even government funds entrusted to his father, were not safe from his hands.” His mother died when he was fourteen, but as she lay on her death-bed, “her boy of fourteen,” we are informed, “was reeling through the streets drunk.” “Even her death failed to arrest his wicked course,” the account says, “and – as one must always be the case when such solemn reminders make one no better – he only grew worse.” So, the conclusion, “The story of this wicked boyhood presents but little variety, except that of sin and crime.” About this time, (aged fourteen, you remember,) he was living in some cheap lodgings, and was brought to such a pitiable state that he stole a crust of bread from an old, hardened soldier who was also lodging in the same house. His comment in later years on that incident was this: “What a bitter thing is the service of Satan, even in this world.”

At sixteen, we still find him on the rampage. “In November 1821, he went to Magdeburg and to Brunswick, to which latter place he was drawn by his passion for a young Roman Catholic

girl. There came a week of sin at Magdeburg and a wasting of his father's means at a costly hotel in Brunswick. His money being gone, he went to the house of an uncle until he was sent away; then, at another expensive hotel, he ran up bills, until, payment being demanded, he had to leave his best clothes as a security, barely escaping arrest. Then, as Wolfenbüttel, he tried the same bold scheme again, until, having nothing for deposit, he ran off; but this time was caught and sent to jail. This boy of sixteen," the narrative concludes, "was already a liar and thief, a swindler and drunkard, accomplished only in crime, a companion of convicted felons and himself in a felon's cell.

At this point, Muller's father comes into the picture once more. Hearing of his son's plight, he arranged to have him released from prison on undertaking his bail. This he did on the condition that his son would show some measure of reform in his life. It is an interesting sidelight on human nature to discover that the older Muller had already set his heart on putting his son into the Lutheran ministry! Therefore, it was decided that the prescribed theological training for "Holy Orders" was just what was needed. Muller was a diligent student, as far as his work was concerned, but a couple of incidents from this period of his life show that he was as dark and vile as ever he had been.

"Whatsoever a man sows that shall he also reap," and at the age of twenty, Muller was confined to his quarters in the University for thirteen weeks with one of those sins peculiar to the life of vice. He had some thoughts of reformation during his illness, but no sooner was he back on his feet than he went off the rails, worse than ever before. He spent all the allowance he had for board and books, etc., and in an effort to cover up this state of affairs, he forced the lock of his trunk and then, after practicing

the part for some time, burst into the Director's room, crying out that his room had been ransacked and his money stolen.

A wave of pity went round the University, and a purse was collected to cover his "losses." The deceit was soon in the open, however, but even though he was openly held up to ridicule, his own testimony is that he felt no sense of shame, or sin whatsoever. The only one pang of conscience he had, if you could call it that, was experienced in having to meet the wife of the Director of the University, who, during that long thirteen weeks illness, had "nursed him like a mother;" but there was nothing more.

Soon after the above-events, George Muller began to take the necessary paths of hypocrisy. "He felt the need for a better life," we are told, "but it was no *godly* motive that swayed him." Indeed no!" "Reformation was a matter purely of expediency; to continue in open sin would bring final exposure, and no parish would have him as pastor." It was as simple as that. He saw three necessities to procure a valuable parish for himself; "he must make attainments in divinity, pass a good examination, and have at least a decent reputation." Thus, the new appearance began to emerge, but not without some measure of irony; and ultimately, the Lord's sovereign hand beginning to appear in grace and mercy.

George Muller concluded that one of the best ways to gain a reputation for piety was to attach himself to someone who already had such a reputation. "Birds of a feather flock together," people would conclude. The young man that he chose out for his purpose was another divinity student by the name of Beta. Beta was, to all intents and purposes, what John Bunyan would have called "A fair and flourishing professor," but the tug

of the world was beginning to take a firm hold on that young man. Thus, the irony: as Muller was turning to look for a companion that would lead him into a reputation for piety. Beta was turning to look for a companion to show him the ways of vice that his heart was now longing after. Who, in his own estimation, better fitted the bill for Muller than that apparent saint, Beta? Who better fitted the bill for Beta than that complete profligate, Muller? And so, their paths were joined.

The outcome isn't hard to guess: Beta was straining at the leash to launch out into a course of wildness, and not even Muller's desire for a holy reputation could restrain him for long; and so, we read that "Sin broke out in unholy indulgence." "George Muller was adept at the ingenuity of vice," we are reminded, "What he had left he pawned to get money, and with Beta and two others went on a four day pleasure drive, and they planned a longer tour in the Alps. Barriers were in the way, for both passports and money were lacking; but fertility of invention swept all such barriers aside. Forged letters, purporting to be from their parents, brought passports for the party, and books put in pawn, secured money." For forty-three days the party lived in drunkenness, and Muller, who had been put in charge of the common purse, ended up virtually robbing the other members of the tour. But out of the whole irony, God was forging His sovereign will and grace, and the very instrument of His choosing was none other than the young man Beta whom Muller had turned to for a reputation of piety in his life.

So evil was that Alpine tour that it cured Beta for ever of any running after the pleasures of sin for a season, and he began to turn more and more to seek after the riches of Christ. Muller, of course, still needed his company for the purpose of reputation, and so, he continued to attach himself to him. One Saturday

afternoon, Beta announced that he would be going to a friend's house that evening, where a small church gathered to "sing, to pray, and to read the Word of God and a printed sermon." That was in November 1825, and much to Beta's surprise, Muller announced that he would go along also.

At that simple gathering the work of grace was begun in George Muller's heart – if it had not already begun; for what also could have induced George Muller to give up a Saturday night of his usual indulgences to go along to a peasant's home for a service like that but that proceeding grace of God that leads men and women unto redemption ground. Muller knew nothing of that at the time, of course, but he knew that by the time that meeting was finished he must come there again. He never forgot the home, or the small church of Christ that gathered there, or the good brother, Wagner, in whose home the people gathered, nor the final farewell that he had from him as he left; "Come as often as you please," he was told, "house and heart are open to you."

And another heart was opened that night, as well – the heart of George Muller himself. "all we say on that journey to Switzerland, and all our former pleasures," he told his friend Beta on the way home, "are as nothing compared to this evening." He could never recall if he actually knelt down and prayed that night when he returned to his rooms, but he knew that from that night onwards, "old things had passed away, and all things had become new."

W. J. Seaton



Mrs Seaton's Letter to the Boys and Girls

Hello Boys and Girls,

You know the best stories ever told are those told by the Lord Jesus Christ. These stories are called Parables. Remember what a parable is. It is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. That is one of the reasons why Jesus' stories are the best, because they give us heavenly meanings; but the best reason of all is because they were told by Jesus himself, The Son of God. Here is one of the last parables that Jesus told, before He went to die on the Cross.

There was once ten young girls, and they were invited to a wedding. Five of them were foolish, and five of them were wise. They all went off together to the wedding, and because it was night, they all took lamps with them. 'The foolish ones, however, did not take any oil for their lamps.

They all waited, and waited. But the wedding party was very late in arriving, and the young girls became sleepy. Just about midnight, someone called out, "The bridegroom is coming go out to meet him!" The young women got up and fixed their lamps, so that they would be ready to join the wedding procession. As they did this, however, the foolish girls discovered that their oil was finished. "What shall we do?" they cried. They turned to their friends and said, "Please give us some of your oil for our lamps." "We cannot give you any of our

oil,” the other girls said, “we only have enough for ourselves; you had better go and buy some.”

The foolish ones had to leave right away to try and buy some oil, but while they were away, the wedding party came, and the wise ones joined the party on the way to the bridegroom’s house.

When all the guests were inside, the door was closed. The foolish ones arrived later on. They knocked, and knocked at the door, and called out – “Open to us!” But the bridegroom would not let them in. They had come too late.

Jesus told this story to let us all know that we must all be *ready* when He comes again into this world. It is an earthly story, but that is the heavenly meaning: when Jesus comes to this world again, we must be ready to meet him.

How then can we be ready for Jesus coming? First of all , we must trust in Him for our salvation for ever and ever; and then, we must try and live for Him every day, and obey all that He tells us to do in His Word, the Bible. In that way, we will be like the wise one who were *ready* when the bridegroom came, and went into the wedding with him.



This is the picture of a *lamp*, boys and girls, like the girls in the parable had. The oil was poured into the bottom of the lamp, and a “wick” stuck out through the top. When a light was put to the wick, then the lamp burned brightly – so long as there was oil inside. The wise girls were ready, your remember, because they had oil in their lamps.

Here are some words from a hymn.

When we walk with the Lord,
In the light of His Word,
What a glory He sheds on our way,
While we do His good will,
He abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey.

Trust and obey!
For there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus –
But to trust and obey.

Every blessing,
Mrs Seaton.

A Weighty Question

How would you want to spend the time if you knew that tomorrow would be your last day on earth? Would you need to spend it asking for that forgiveness of sin which you should have asked for long ago? It is, of course, infinitely better to make a death-bed repentance than not to repent at all.

But many who put off until the last moment the matter of getting right with God, find themselves unable to repent at that time. A wise counsellor, Dr Charles Hodge, one said, “It is important that when we come to die, we have nothing to do but die.” Such a one can wait calmly the coming of death, knowing that his sins are forgiven and that all will be well.

(Dr Loraine Boetiner)

A Testimonial Hymn

***By
John Newton***

In evil long I took delight,
Unawed by shame or fear;
Till a new object struck my sight,
And stopped my wild career.

I saw One hanging on a tree,
In agonies and blood;
Who fixed His languid eyes on me,
As near His cross I stood.

Sure, never till my latest breath
Can I forget that look;
It seemed to charge me with His death,
Though not a word He spoke.

My conscience felt and owned the guilt,
And plunged me in despair;
I saw my sins His blood has spilt,
And helped to nail him there.

A second look He gave, which said,
“I freely all forgive;
This blood is for thy ransom paid,
I die that thou may'st live.”

Thus, while His death my sin displays
In all its blackest hue,
Such is the mystery of grace,
It seals my pardon too.

Remembering From Whence We Came.

“The humble soul will always remember its former low estate, as Jacob never forgot his travelling staff, nor David his shepherd’s crook. Mercy makes a humble soul glad, but not proud. A humble soul is lowest when his mercies are highest; he is least when he is greatest; he is lowest when he is highest. Nothing melts like mercy; nothing draws like mercy; nothing humbles like mercy.”

(Dr Guthrie).