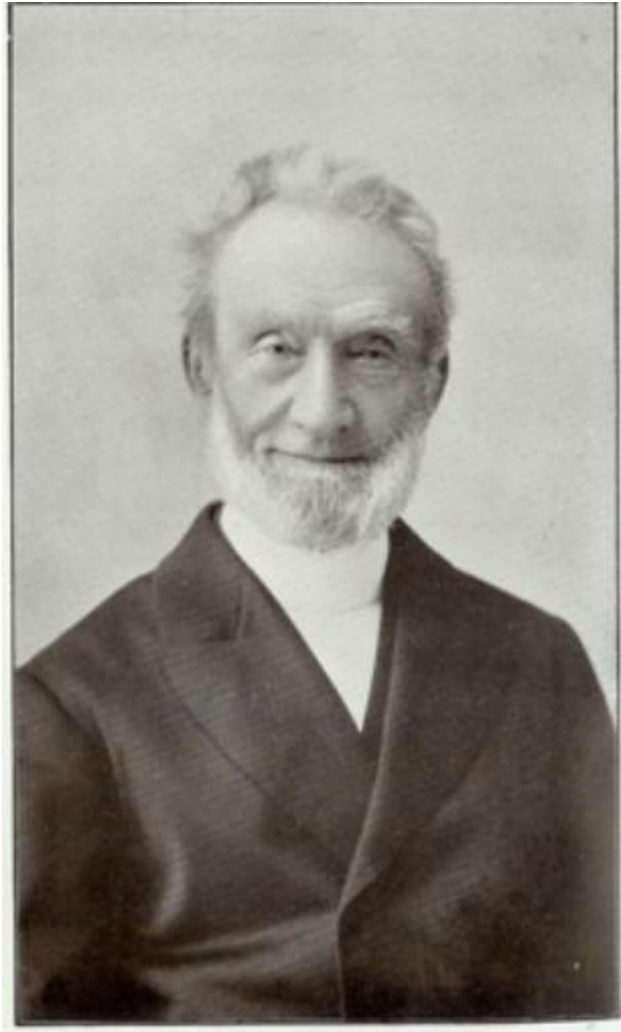


# THE GEORGE MUELLER STORY



(1805 - 1898)

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## A Rascal Changed

George was not yet ten years old. His father, a collector of excise (tax) money, had left him in a room alone--alone, that is, except for a pile of money.

George waited & watched. Then, quickly, he crossed the room & stuffed some of the money into his shoe. He re-crossed the room & sat down.

The door opened, & his father entered. He, too, was interested in that sum of money. He walked over & swiftly counted it.

"Ah! Money is missing. Stand up, boy." Pale-faced, George stood up. His father searched him. Knowing George, he searched him thoroughly, & found the money in his shoe.

George's father had been missing little amounts of money for a while. He had left George alone with money just to see if he was the culprit. Now he knew.

George Mueller was like that. He learned to steal & cheat at a very early age. He had been born on September 27th, 1805, in Kroppenstadt, Prussia (Northern Germany). His parents had been kind to him, but he was soon a heartbreak to them.

When George was a little older, he left home to attend a good school in Halberstadt (in Eastern Germany). He was very young to leave home, but he was quite glad to be away from his father's watchful eye.

When he was 14, he returned to his lodgings one evening to find his father waiting for him. "What is father doing here in Halberstadt?" thought George. He soon knew. George's mother had died & his father had come to take him home to the funeral. He felt ashamed of himself. Not knowing of her illness, Mueller had played cards until two on Sunday morning. Then, after living it up at a tavern, he wandered the streets, half drunk, with some friends, while his mother was dying at home.

What a sad scene--a young boy following the body of his mother to the grave, having been such a selfish & disobedient son! But George was not long affected by the shock of his mother's death. Although he made resolutions to improve, he broke them almost as fast as they were made.

With his sixteenth birthday past, George set off on a tour (a vacation trip), during Christmas holidays. Where did he find the money? George did not think he needed much money. His plan was to stay in hotels for short periods of time, & run away before he was asked for payment.

Having seen Magdeburg & Brunswick (nearby cities in Northern Germany), George arrived at Wolfenbittel, & stayed for two days at an inn. As soon as he arrived, he was on the lookout for a way of escape. He thought of climbing out of the window of his room in the middle of the night, but the window was too high above the ground. There was no other way but to make his escape in broad daylight. After passing through the front door of the inn, he walked a little, then ran. But George was suspected, caught, & brought back. He confessed that he

had no money, & asked for mercy. But all the mercy he got was to be marched along between two soldiers to stand before a police officer. He was then sent to jail. How George must have fretted, as the New Year's festivities passed while he was locked in a tiny room! His father let him stay there a while to learn his lessons. Half of January 1822 passed before his father sent enough money to have him released from prison.

George then went back to his studies, & worked hard, though he continued to live a prodigal lifestyle. There was one special reason why he was now spending so much time working. He was preparing to be a clergyman, & he could not hope to get a minister's job with good pay unless he was well trained. Of course, the thought did occur to him that he would need to change his own life if he was going to preach to others. However, George at this stage never went farther than thinking about that; he continued to live in the way he had always done. He found it impossible to manage money, & was forced to pawn his watch, some of his linen, & his clothes. He felt utterly miserable, wanting to improve, but just never seeming to be able to manage it.

In a tavern one day, Mueller met an old school friend named Beta. They became friends again, & after some months Beta told George that he usually went on Saturday evenings to a Bible meeting in another friend's house. To Beta's surprise, George became very interested in these meetings, & asked if he could attend one. In the end, Beta agreed. They met one Saturday & went along to Beta's friend's house. Beta's friend was a tradesman (merchant) called Wagner. The two young men were warmly welcomed at the door & Mueller was assured, "House & heart are open to you." Impressed by the welcome given to him as a stranger, George's interest increased.

What took place that evening was simple enough, but it proved to be the turning point in Mueller's life. There was singing, reading, & prayer. It was the prayers that most reached Mueller's heart. First a man prayed who was afterwards to become a missionary in Africa, but the prayer at the end impressed Mueller even more. It was offered by the host himself, & as Mueller listened he thought. He was more educated than this man, yet this man could pray so much better than he could. As Mueller listened, he began to feel very small. He felt that it was wrong to live a life as empty & meaningless as his was. Here was a simple man, but there was so much more in his prayer than in all the pleasures which filled up Mueller's life. Wagner's prayer was to Mueller like a voice from a world he did not know. It was like a voice from Heaven, & Mueller's heart was drawn heavenward by it. He left

Wagner's house that evening a different man--a man who knew happiness for the first time in his life.

Mueller later wrote of this evening: It pleased God to teach me something of the meaning of that precious truth, 'God so loved the World, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' I understood something of the reason why the Lord Jesus died on the cross, & suffered such 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 (understanding) in some measure the Love of Jesus for my soul, I was constrained (moved) to love Him in return. What all the exhortations of my father & others could not effect, what all my own resolutions could not bring about--even to renounce a life of sin & profligacy (delinquency)--I was enabled to do, constrained by the Love of Jesus."

### A Difficult Decision

George Mueller was now a new man. He was living a new life, a life which he shared with new friends. One of these friends was named Hermann Ball. He had been brought up in a wealthy home, but had given up all his comforts to go to tell the Jews of Poland about Jesus, the only Saviour of sinners. Hermann's example impressed George; he wanted to become a missionary too.

### A Love Lost

During that time, George fell in love. Her name was Ermegarde, & she was the prettiest girl he had ever met! She & her father came to Wagner's Saturday night prayer meetings--although Wagner said he thought the father was mostly interested in the coffee served after the meeting--& they had begun seeing each other.

Ermegarde was very different than George, though. Where he was now serious & solemn, thrilled about the way his life was changing, she was foolish & festive, shallow & frivolous. He had decided to become a missionary rather than a minister of the proper state church. Where he would serve, when he would go, these were questions he would answer later. Now it was enough to know that he had changed his vocation.

Yet each Saturday at Wagner's prayer meeting, his joy diminished. His conviction wavered. Always Ermegarde was there to tease him. Gracious, George, don't be so solemn!" And when he was with her, he felt as if God's voice & call were just a dream.

One Saturday night after the prayer meeting he was talking to her. She wore a silk dress with a collar like a fluffy April cloud. Suddenly overwhelmed by her sweetness, he bent down & kissed her. He said, I love you, Ermegarde."

She looked pale. Oh, George, I think I love you too!" He kissed her again. Then she said, If only . . . "

"If only what?"

"All this talk about being a missionary."

"All this talk!"

Then you are serious."

Yes, very serious."

"George, I . . . I don't think I'd fit in at all."

Holding her close, listening for her papa coming down the hall, he said, You just think that now. You'll learn. We'll learn together."

But her answer shattered him. I don't want to learn. Missionaries are so . . . shabby & poor."

"But I'm going to be a missionary, & I want you to marry me." He hadn't intended to say it so positively, but it had been said.

She fussed with the strings of her bonnet. George, do be sensible. Why don't you think about teaching? Or law? They're both good professions."

"Are you asking me to give up my calling?"

"I'm not asking," she retorted, I'm telling you. You think it over. You'll just have to choose."

"Choose?"

"Yes. Give up something."

George went home a very unhappy young man that night, & the next two weeks were black & dismal. When he saw Ermegarde, they talked, they argued, they kissed. And sometimes his dream of going to the mission field seemed just that--a dream. He couldn't give up Ermegarde.

When George met Hermann Ball, he was very impressed by him. He was a missionary, but with the manners of a fine gentleman. He got Hermann to tell him his story.

Yes, his family had money. His father was a wealthy merchant in Eastern Germany. No, Hermann's family didn't understand how a man could throw a career away for Christ. He had been disinherited--cut off from his family's wealth for good.

What a great thing he had done, George started to say. Hermann stopped him. You don't say, `Here is a life with the Polish Jews, poor,

maybe even disagreeable. And here is my family with its carriages & its carpets & its rich Christmas puddings."

George was listening closely.

"You say, 'God wants me to do this. So that's the only way I can be happy.' No, Mueller, it isn't that I've given up so much. I've gained more."

"It's still a big sacrifice. You gave up so much!"

"Don't make me out to be a hero. In my place, you'd do the same thing, wouldn't you?"

In his own ears, George's voice sounded hollow, Yes, I suppose I would."

When he met Ermegarde after the next prayer meeting, she was wearing a beautiful new dress. But George tried not to listen to her talk. Remembering Hermann Ball, he knew what he had to say.

"Listen to me, Ermegarde. Make your choice. Choose to marry a missionary, or choose to be what you already are--a shallow little beauty."

She stopped talking & turned wide eyes to look at George. This is a new George," she said.

"In God's strength, I am."

She teased, "And a new kind of God."

But he did not smile. Ermegarde, what will it be?"

"I won't marry a missionary," she said as she stamped her foot.

George was angry at the woman, angry at her for being so beautiful & yet so empty. Then you don't marry Mueller!" And with that, he flung himself out the door, down the hall & into the night. It seemed as if he had turned a corner in his life, & the mission field was in sight just ahead.

A Man's Foes . . . " (Mat.10:36)

To become a missionary, George would need proper training. But to be allowed to enter a Missionary college, he would require his father's signature on the application form. Here was a difficulty. George knew that his father would not be pleased at his plan to become a missionary. Still, he would make the effort, so off he went home by carriage, with the all-important form in his pocket.

George should have enjoyed his supper that evening, but he was thinking too much about what he had come home for.

After supper, George & his father withdrew together to the parlour. There George laid the form before his father. The reply was definite: When I say 'No,' I mean 'No!'"

George could not understand his father's attitude at first, as he seemed angry without a cause. After an argument, his father stomped upstairs to go to bed, while George wondered what he would do now.

In the morning, George tried again. His father was different, gentler. He had aged overnight, or he wanted George to think so. He said, My son, try to understand your father. In one afternoon, you tore this old man's dreams down."

"You're not old," George said stiffly.

"My hopes, my little securities. I was to be so proud to say, 'There goes my son.' Now what must I say? 'My son, he is a missionary, but he does not know the Bible says honour thy father & thy mother.'"

"It also says, 'Leave all & follow Me,'" George answered. Then, earnestly, George asked the question he knew was inevitable, Father, what do you want me to do?"

The answer came at once. When you are through at the university, find a nice church. Settle down. Marry. Have a nice parsonage. Children. And for the old father, a room, a nice warm room with wide windows."

"For a nice warm room with wide windows, you'd have me say no to God?"

"I wouldn't have you run to the end of the four winds to convert the heathen & not have a penny for your sick aged parent."

George bit his lips. His father wasn't sick, & he wasn't old. He had money in the bank. He was well-to-do.

An old man needs his security." His father brushed at his eyes, as if wiping away tears.

"Father, may God forgive you for what you do to me today. May He forgive you for making me choose."

"And what do you choose?"

"I've promised God to serve Him & I'll keep my promise. Somewhere there's a mission field that needs me. I will go there. I will not be a minister."

"But the application blank . . . I tell you, I will not sign it!"

"Then don't sign it. I'll finish at the university & make the best of it."

George was being asked to think of his father, instead of giving his

life to God. He thought about the choice very deeply, & then came to a decision. If his father was going to come between him & serving God, he would have to live without his father's help. He would take no more money from him as long as he lived, & he told him so.

Back at the University in Halle (former East Germany), George became more & more aware of what he had done. He had cut himself off from his only source of support, with two more years of university. What could he do now? One morning, at breakfast-time, he knew what he would do. He got down on his knees, told his needs to God, & asked for His help.

Later, George heard a knock at the door of his room. One of his tutors (teachers) stood there. He was not alone, he had an American visitor with him. George welcomed both men, & closed the door. But the men had no time to chat, they had come for a special purpose. This American wished to learn German. George's tutor had brought the visitor along to arrange with George to teach him German. There would in fact be several men whom he would teach. They would study together, & would pay George separately for his help. Only then did George realise what this unexpected visit meant. It meant that he would have money to help him pay the expenses his father used to pay for him. More than that, it meant that God had immediately answered his prayer for help!

### Witnessing, & Life in England!

George now began to witness a great deal. He often stuffed his pockets full of tracts so that he could give them to people whom he met on his walks, & perhaps get into conversations with them. He wrote letters to his former friends, pleading with them to turn to Jesus.

Not all his efforts at evangelism were successful. He wrote: Once I met a beggar in the fields, & spoke to him about his soul. But when I perceived it made no impression on him, I spoke more loudly; & when he still remained unmoved, I quite yelled in talking to him; till at last I went away, seeing it was of no use." He later learned more wisdom in his witnessing efforts.

Later that year, George became very concerned about where he should go as a missionary. He had hoped to go to Bucharest, Romania, but war broke out in that area, & it was out of the question. One day, during that time when George was praying for guidance, he had a meal with the tutor mentioned previously. This man had a suggestion to make. He wanted George to apply to a mission society in London which sent out missionaries to the Jews. After praying about this, George



agreed, & his tutor, Dr. Tholuck, sent off an application for him. For a long time, George waited. At last a reply came, & he knew he had been accepted as a missionary to the Jews.

There were difficulties, however. George would have to go to London, & he would have to study with the society for six months before they sent him out as a missionary. He was disappointed at first. He had spent years in study, & longed to become a missionary immediately. Reluctantly, George accepted this delay & sailed for London in March, 1829. There he studied for twelve hours each day, but all the time his thoughts were flitting away from Hebrew grammar to the Jews in Houndsditch & Hyde Park in London. George longed to go out & tell them about his Saviour, instead of sitting at his books all day.

After two months of study, George became ill. His doctor sent him to recover in the fresh sea air of Devon, southwest of London. In the quietness & peace of Teignmouth, the future missionary benefitted (was helped) in body & in soul. When he returned to London in September 1829, he was like a new man. He began a prayer meeting among fellow students from six to eight each morning; in the evening too, he often held family prayers. Apart from that, George often spent hours alone in prayer.

But this was not the only direction in which George's new zeal moved him. He became convinced that he should add personal witnessing to his studies. He wrote his name & address on hundreds of tracts & gave them out, inviting the recipients to come talk to him. He began preaching on a street corner in the Jewish community, & gathered together fifty boys to whom he would read the Scriptures.

Late in December, George was back in Devon. The sea was a great attraction; he used to love watching it stretch out till it merged with the sky. The sea was free, thought George, but he was not. He was hemmed in, he was restricted, up in London. If he kept on with the missionary society, he would be obliged to witness mostly among the Jews. However, it seemed to him that the Scriptural plan was to witness to the Jews, but if they rejected it, he should be free to evangelise the Gentiles also, who were often more receptive. Then he decided. He would leave London & move down to Devon. He would also leave the mission society, & would from now on work on his own. So he left London, came down to the little fishing village of Teignmouth, & began to preach there with little more than five Pounds in his pockets, no income & no employment. A small congregation soon asked him to become their minister, & George accepted the invitation. Of course,

although he was now a minister in Teignmouth, he was free to preach elsewhere at times.

One other place where George sometimes preached was quite a distance away, in Exeter. However the distance was no obstacle, & George was soon very eager to make that particular journey. He had met a lady there whom he had liked at once. He had given up a pretty girl in Germany, & this English lady was eight years older than himself, but George knew where his heart lay. In October, 1830, he married Mary Groves.

Soon after his marriage, the couple decided that it was wrong for Mueller to receive a set salary. His salary had been made up of pew (seat) rentals in his church, which his congregation paid on a regular basis. Since the better seats were more expensive, Mueller thought it contrary to the equality of James 2:1-6. Therefore all pew rentals were abandoned & all seats made free. Mueller announced to the church that he would give up his regular salary; he gave his reasons & read Philippians Chapter 4. Then a box was placed in the church with a notice saying that all who wished to support Mr. & Mrs. Mueller might put their offerings therein. Mueller also decided that from that time onwards he would ask no one to help him financially in any way. Mueller was to operate this way for the rest of his life.

#### The Deacon & the Collection Box

George's assistant at the church, Deacon Thornsburry, was out fishing on the wharf when George found him. He had something important to tell him.

"You want to see me about something special, Pastor?"

George nodded. It's the contribution box in the church."

The deacon looked up at George. Pastor Mueller, any time you want to change your mind, you speak the word. We'll take the box down & put you back on a regular salary. You hear me, Son? To tell you the truth, Pastor, that wife of yours has been looking peaked (sickly) lately. You folks getting enough to eat?"

"Deacon," Mueller replied, "God has proven Himself. People are generous." Then, in a rush, Deacon, you know I promised God never to ask any man for money as long as I live. Nothing will break that promise. But . . ."

Even before the deacon answered, his hand reached for the pocket of his jacket. Not another word. Happens I have a mite extra on me today and . . ."

"No, wait. I didn't come down here to ask for money, just to ask you to have a good system for collecting the money from the church

box, like once a week. If Mary & I could count on the money--no matter how much or how little--on one certain day every week, then we could plan. That's all."

"Well, don't think twice, Pastor," responded the deacon. Of course, we'll do like you want, empty the box once a week & give you the money. I can't see any reason why we couldn't oblige with that, no reason at all."

(Later:)

The key turned & the church door swung back as the deacon entered & headed for the collection box. With his knotty knuckles, he rapped sharply on the bottom of the box. From the depths, a few coins jingled. Doesn't sound like much more than a few buttons!" he said indignantly.

Unlocking the box, he scooped them up. Now what do you make of that? Hardly enough for a man to clench his fist around. Mighty embarrassing, I'd say!"

Later the deacon thrust his leathery old face in his wife's & said, I'll tell you, Julia, I'm not going over to the Pastor's with this pitiful handful of coins. It's an embarrassment."

But Julia did not retreat. You promised George every week! You've said the same thing for two weeks, despite what you promised him. Why, you haven't been over to the Muellers' with a shilling for almost three weeks."

"Julia, it tells a sorry tale for our people."

"Shame on your miserable pride. The poor laddie & his wife may be starving for all you know. He asked for the money once a week & you're letting him down."

"Well, it looks to me like the Heavenly Provider has let George Mueller down for reasons of His Own!"

The key turned & the church door swung open again. George groped his way through the darkness to the collection box. He had never done this before. He would not take a single coin from the box--he would wait till the deacon brought it to him--but he had to be assured that God had provided.

He rapped on the bottom of the box, & only the sound of his knuckles against the wood came back to him. He rapped again, harder, but he heard no coins dance.

"Nothing!" He said it incredulously & rapped again. Empty! Has it come to this, nothing from God?"

At home, he looked down at Mary on the bed asleep. What had his faith done to the person he loved best? Would his determined faith in

God starve her? Was his determination to depend on God, not man, no better than irresponsibility? He knew what he must do next.

He gently shook Mary. Get out of bed."

Sleepily, she groped for her wrap at the foot of the bed.

"We have to pray."

Now she was awake. George, something's wrong!"

"Nothing's wrong," he told her solemnly. She slid from the side of the bed to her knees, & he knelt beside her. Not if we believe His promises." He took her hand, then prayed, Lord, all we are comes from You. All we have. This is the promise we hold to & we won't give it up. If You are holding back from us because of some sin, cleanse our hearts. Speak to us. And then, O Lord, supply our needs."

About that time, Deacon Thornsburry lumbered out of bed to sit by the window, telling his wife, I can't sleep no matter how I turn. Seems like I got George Mueller on my mind & I can't get him off. I was wrong to hold back that money on account of pride. Soon as the sun is up, I'll get over there with the coins."

The Muellers were eating breakfast when they heard the knock on the door. The deacon explained, I brought the collection box. Isn't but a mite. One pound, eight shillings. I'm ashamed to hand it to you."

"This is God's money, Deacon. Never be ashamed of it." George tried to keep his voice even, but his heart was singing. God had provided!

"It's funny," the deacon told him. Seems like I heard that go through my mind last night. Or maybe I heard someone say it somewhere."

The corners of George's mouth quirked upwards in merriment. Yes, Deacon, I wouldn't be a bit surprised if you did."

And that's the way it went for George. When he got down to his very last shilling in April, somebody dropped a couple of sovereigns into Mary's handbag as she rode home on the train. In November, he didn't have enough money to buy bread for his next meal. That afternoon, a woman he had never seen before knocked at his door & handed him a loaf of her own fresh-baked bread.

By the end of that first year of trusting God, George had received 131 Pounds, which was almost 3 times as much as the full salary he had formerly accepted from the church!

## Beginnings at Bristol

George Mueller had known Henry Craik for some time now. He had come to know him in Teignmouth (Southern England). The two were about the same age, & held the same beliefs, though they were very different men. In February, 1832, Henry lost his young wife, & he was soon convinced to go to Bristol for a time. There was a congregation there without a pastor, & he had been asked to preach there.

Soon after Henry arrived in Bristol, a thought occurred to him. There was so much need in the city, so much work to be done, wouldn't it be nice if George would leave Teignmouth & join him?

It must have been difficult for Mary Mueller. She was probably by now quite attached to their home in Teignmouth, & she was looking forward to having her first child in September. Now she was being asked to leave her pleasant seaside home & settle in the middle of a dirty, noisy city. But she knew one thing, her husband & Henry Craik had made up their minds to move to Bristol after praying for three weeks for guidance. She knew her duty was to believe & obey.

So the two country pastors came to settle in the big city of Bristol towards the end of May. Things were not easy for them that Summer. Cholera broke out, & many of the people of Bristol died. In August, the heat became unbearable. The heat & the plague! The two young ministers seemed to have been called to serve in a city of sick & dying.

But the epidemic did not stop them. Mueller & Craik prayed with dying men. They sat in sweltering rooms with feverish children, reading the Bible endlessly as August blistered into September.

In September, George found himself confronted by a weary, hysterical wife. Standing in the door of their home, she said, George Mueller, you won't leave this house today."

He understood her concern. These were terrible, frightening times for Mary. But God's call had to come before his wife's fear. He took her arm, They're my people. I came here to minister to them."

"You didn't come to kill yourself. What can you do, anyway?"

"Pray!"

"Pray! Every morning for two hours you've prayed. Two hundred of you at the church. It hasn't stopped the epidemic."

"Don't say it, Mary. Only one person from the church has died."

Her voice rose higher. Two hundred of you, praying & spreading germs. Think about me. And the baby! The baby, George, is due in less than a month! Suppose you brought cholera home to me? What about

the baby? You talk about ministering to people. Do something for your own child, George. Stay home. Hide!" She sobbed wildly.

"I'm going out, Mary!" He opened the door, & the funeral bells moaned over the city. I'll minister to Bristol as God called me to do. He never said, 'In fair weather & good health.' He said, 'Go to Bristol & work.' I'm sorry, Mary, but this comes first."

And George & Henry went about the streets of Bristol helping others, often weary but untouched by the epidemic. No evil befell them, nor did any plague come nigh their dwelling. For, as the Lord promised in Psalm 91, He shall give His Angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."

Then, in October, the plague that had caused the death of many began itself to die. Only one member from George's church had died. There was a full day set apart for thanksgiving! And now there was time for George to rest a little. Time to hear the tiny cry that made such a change from the funeral bell. Time to take up the little bundle of life, born in the shadow of the deadly plague: Baby Lydia Mueller.

### How Far Can a Shilling Go?

Just after New Year's Day, 1833, a special letter arrived at Mr. Mueller's home. It had come from Baghdad (in modern-day Iraq). The envelope contained 200 Pounds, & the letter invited George & Henry to leave immediately as missionaries to Baghdad.

For the last few years, George had always had a desire to sail off to some strange foreign country with the Gospel. As he trudged the dirty, slushy streets of Bristol these January days, this call to Baghdad had a special appeal.

But something kept Mueller from going to Baghdad--he could not forget the needs of Bristol. In fact, once he had put Baghdad out of his mind, the needs of those around him came more into his mind than ever before.

He was especially concerned about orphans in slum areas. Many of these children were kept in large unfriendly almshouses, no better than prisons, which they shared with criminals & lunatics.

Mueller heard about societies which ran free day schools for slum children, & for a time he contributed to their support. But he became concerned about the way these schools were run. For one thing, if a man gave money to support the schools, he had a say in how the schools should be run, whether he was a Christian or not.--Which meant some day schools were run by decidedly un-Christian methods & people.

By the beginning of 1834, George had made up his mind on the matter. He felt that God was directing him to begin an organisation which would include the provision of day schools for slum children. It would be called the "Scriptural Knowledge Institute". The Institution would also run Sunday Schools, would help to distribute Bibles, & would provide support for missions. It was a lot of work to undertake, & Mueller's wife told him so.

The proposed increase of George's responsibilities came at an awkward time. They had, in fact, one shilling in the home (worth nine U.S. cents now) at the time George spoke about it. Mary wondered how far a shilling would go to provide for themselves alone, far less for themselves plus George's new projects. Also, another little mouth would soon need to be fed.

Mueller's second child, a son, was born on the eighth of March. For a time, his new plans were somewhat elbowed out of his thoughts. Then, in April, he came right back to thinking about them. He prayed, & told the Lord that if he didn't get money soon he'd have to give up his plans. He added that, if he got twenty Pounds, he would use it to start his new work. He would use it to buy Bibles, & give them away.

That same day, a woman came to the Muellers' home & handed George an envelope. It contained twenty Pounds!

"Madam, do you want me to spend this for something special?" George asked.

"Well--what I had in mind was Bibles."

That was the beginning, & the work grew until a school became established--a school which was thoroughly Christian.

Then the school's headmaster told Mr. Mueller about something which disturbed him. If pupils who attended the school became orphans, they were taken from the school & placed in the horrible almshouses (workhouses where the poor, needy & orphaned lived). The conditions within the workhouses were a social disgrace; the children imprisoned within their walls became quickly demoralised by the decrepit, insane & handicapped adults who also lived there. There they remained until considered old enough (they were still very young) to work. Penniless orphans were generally despised by all, & pitied by none," according to Charles Dickens, who wrote several of his novels about English society at this time.

George said he wanted to do something to prevent this happening. The headmaster replied that the workhouses provided food for the children--the school could not care for the orphans in this way.

Mueller had his answer: We'll teach the children in orphanages

instead of schools." (In 1835, orphanages were almost unheard of in any part of the country.) The headmaster was not encouraging: You don't have the time. You're the pastor of a church. You have the day school already. And if you'll pardon me for saying this, Mr. Mueller, you don't have the money either."

The headmaster seemed to be speaking the truth. Mueller's idea now looked silly. But George wanted to know one thing, before he ruled out the possibility of beginning an orphanage. Why had the thought of an orphanage occurred to him? Had not God put the thought into his mind? If he knew that this was God's plan, then was not He the God of the impossible?

(Note: At this time in England there were only a dozen orphanages, all small, & only one of them took in destitute children. The other 11 required payment of a lifetime fee for each child accepted. Mueller longed to establish an orphanage which would ask no payment, operating totally by faith.)

#### A Voice from the Past

For a month, George thought about it. Then Mary's brother came home. He was a dentist, & a missionary in the East Indies (India & Southeast Asia). He was going on to Germany, to encourage others to join him in mission work, & he asked George to go as interpreter. The journey took a long time in those days. But it was a chance to think, an opportunity to pray.

When George & his brother-in-law arrived in Halle, Germany, George looked up his former tutor--the one who had advised him to go to London. Then a simple thing happened--simple but significant. George asked Dr. Tholuck for the address of a mutual friend. He was told that he stayed in a building used as an orphanage. In fact, George himself had stayed in a room in this orphanage when he had been a student in Halle.

The orphanage had been built over a hundred years before by a man called Francke. George had often thought of this before, but the fact came to him with particular force now: Francke had built by faith & prayer alone. He had constructed this orphanage in the 1700s & asked no man for any funds. He had asked in secret, & his Heavenly Father had rewarded him openly. George wondered as he stood again within the walls of this ancient house, had God taken him from England just to show him this house that proved His power to answer prayer?

In six weeks, he was home again. Still turning things over in his mind, he went about his duties as a pastor. One evening he went to



have tea with a Christian lady, but more than his tea was awaiting him in her home. For while there, he came across the biography of Francke of Halle. The effect was so much the greater, as Mueller had so recently seen the orphan home Francke had built by faith. The next day, & for days after that, a voice seemed to say to Mueller: You should do the same." Not, of course, just to imitate A. H. Francke, but Mueller's motive was this:

Many times he met believers who were afflicted by doubts. They knew that the Bible was true, they had heard of many proofs of it in the past, but still they had doubts. Mueller wanted to prove to them that God was still as true to His Word as He had been in the past. If God would provide an orphanage in answer to faith & prayer, would that not encourage the people of God to believe? Mueller had proved God in his own life, & he was eager that others should enjoy the same experience.

For weeks he prayed. Each day, it was the same prayer. He needed a thousand Pounds (\$1,800) to start this work, a large amount in those days. Also, he needed a suitable house, three or four staff members, & all the different items that a house needs. One day, he was thinking about this prayer of his. Was he asking for too much? He opened his Bible & began to read at Psalm 79. He read through Psalm 80 to Psalm 81. He came to verse 10: Open thy mouth wide & I will fill it." Surely this was God's voice! Others had said that he was mad, but not God. God had surely told him to go on.

Five days later Mueller was reading out to his wife the contents of a letter received from a Christian couple. It read:

"We propose ourselves for the intended orphan house, if you think us qualified for it; also to give up all the furniture which the Lord has given us for the use of your home, & to do this without receiving any salary whatever, believing that if it be the Will of the Lord to employ us, He will supply our needs."

On the day that Mueller received this letter, another woman offered her services as well for the orphan house, & yet another woman donated ten shillings towards it. About the same time he received 100 Pounds, a great amount in those days, from a poor seamstress who earned about 3 shillings (27 U.S. cents) per week. (See British Money" on pg.6.) Mueller was so surprised that he decided to call on this lady. She explained that she had inherited the money & said, Rather than the orphan home should not be established, I will give all the money I have." Still afraid that she might be offering the money rashly, Mueller asked if she had counted the cost. What could he answer when she replied: The Lord Jesus has given His last drop of blood for me, & should I not give all the money I have?"

Apart from such gifts of money, there were also handed over plates, basins, jugs, mugs, knives, forks & a blanket.

The climax to these encouragements came at the end of January, 1836. George rushed home to tell Mary about it. Number 6 Wilson Street in Bristol was now theirs, to be used as an orphan house!

### Trials of Faith

April 21st was just another working day for most of the citizens of Bristol, though they may have been cheered in their daily routine by the sight of the Spring flowers. But on that day Mueller was not looking to the new life beginning to brighten the grimy city gardens. He was thinking of another kind of beginning. In a sense, today was the day for the life of the orphanage to begin: It was the day appointed for receiving applications.

But, by lunchtime, no one had applied to have any orphan children received. Perhaps in the afternoon," thought Mueller. But the clock in No. 6 Wilson Street ticked its way through all the hours of afternoon & still the report was the same: No applications received."

That evening Mueller felt very low. Perhaps, after all his praying & all his trusting, God was not in this at all. He prayed & searched his heart. Then suddenly he stumbled on the truth. Everything they had prayed for they had received. But they had not prayed for children. No wonder that none had turned up! It was God's gentle reminder that they were engaged in His work, & not their own, so throughout the evening of February 3rd, 1836, George committed the whole matter to the Lord. The next day, the first application for admission was received & it was not long before the house was full!

After that, things went easily for a time. In eight months, another house on Wilson Street had been taken over for infant orphans. Nine months later again, a third house was opened for thirty orphan boys.

Then came a period of trial. Mueller's health began to deteriorate & he was greatly weakened by an inactive liver. Going to meetings at the church made him worse, & any sort of mental exertion exhausted him. His sickness lingered for months, but as he began to recover he testified, I preached on the whole with much more enjoyment & with much more earnestness & prayerfulness than I did before I was taken ill. I also felt more the solemnity of the work." Mueller was then about 33 years old.

Further trials came not in the area of health but of finances. On August 18th, 1838, for example, Mueller confesses, I have not one penny in hand for the orphans. In a day or two again many Pounds will be needed." During these months, God supplied Mueller's needs day by day, rather than month by month. Sometimes it was hour by hour.

Time & again he had to pray to God: We need so much by such a time-- if we do not get it, we must close." And the money always came, without Mueller's breathing a hint of his needs to any man! Such an instance occurred in February, 1842. One day he wrote: If the Lord were not to send means by nine o'clock tomorrow morning, His Name would be dishonoured. But I am fully assured that He will not leave us."

By seven o'clock the next morning, Mueller's expectation had not been fulfilled. At that time there was a businessman walking along to work. He thought for a moment of the orphans, & decided he would call in the evening with some money. He went on. Then he felt somehow he must go immediately with his gift, so he turned back along the street. As he retraced his steps, it came forcibly to his mind that important matters had to be dealt with at his office, so again he came to a standstill. He felt he must go to his work, & yet he could not. He did not know it, but he needed to justify George Mueller's trust in God. So the thought kept hammering at the businessman's brain: Go at once, go at once." In the end he surrendered, turned again towards the orphanage, & handed in three sovereigns just in time for George's prayer to be answered!

God continued to supply, however once things got so bad that Mueller had to tell his staff the difficulty they were in. He had long held back from telling them, because he had said at the beginning he would make known his needs to God alone. But now he saw that his own staff members were different. It was not breaking his rule to tell them how things stood. They were all Christians, engaged in the same work as himself. It was right that they should share the burden of prayer with him, though no one else would be told.

Mueller was deeply moved by their response. The cook gave the six Pounds which she had lodged in the bank. Another woman refused to take her salary, saying her widow's pension was quite enough.

But the small pile of coins which his willing staff had collected disappeared by the end of the week. After all, there were 100 people to be fed in the three houses. Mueller had to call the staff together again to ask them to pray. After a time, someone handed over a small collection. George asked where it had come from, but no one would say. He demanded to know. Then his helpers confessed that they had sold off little articles in their possession. They had felt they could not heartily pray to God for help while they knew they themselves kept back some of their own things.

But in a day or two, this money was spent as well. Then Mueller wrote: The funds are exhausted." Mueller had no money in his hand. It looked like the end.

## A Gift Just in Time

A woman passed down Wilson Street & stared in at the front window of Number 6. Then she entered, bringing a huge bag with her. She asked to see Mr. Mueller.

When she caught sight of the director of the orphanage, she began to chat with him in an excited way about Bristol. It was such a pleasant change from London, & so on. Mueller must have sighed. What had this talkative woman to do with him, or with the answer to his prayers which he hourly offered up? He soon knew.

She emptied her purse on the table. The money came to 3 Pounds 2 shillings, enough, at that time, to provide for all the next day's needs. George's heart missed a beat. Then this lady told him she had been lodging next door for the past five days. She had not called sooner with the money because they had seemed so busy in the orphanage. These five days had been among the most trying in Mueller's life. The money he needed had lain next door until his need was desperate.

As soon as the woman left, Mueller burst out into loud praises & thanks the first moment I was alone. That the money had been so near the orphan houses for several days without being given is a plain proof that it was from the beginning in the heart of God to help us, but because He delights in the prayers of His children, He allowed us to pray so long; also to try our faith, & to make the answer so much the sweeter."

Throughout this period, the orphans knew nothing of the trial. In the midst of one of the darkest periods, Mueller recorded, These dear little ones know nothing about it, because their tables are as well supplied as when there were hundreds of Pounds in the bank, & they have lack of nothing." At another time he wrote, Had I thousands of Pounds in hand, they would have fared no better than they have, for they have always had good nourishing food, the necessary articles of clothing, etc." In other words, the periods of trial were so in the sense that there was no excess of funds. God supplied the need by the day, even by the hour. Enough was sent, but no more than enough.

What would you do," people sometimes asked Mueller, in case there were a mealtime to come & you had no provisions for the children, or they really lacked clothes, & you had no money to procure them?"

Such a thing is impossible," Mueller would assure them, as long as the Lord gives us grace to trust in Him, for 'whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed.' But should we ever be so left to ourselves as to forsake the Lord & trust in an arm of flesh, or should we 'regard iniquity in our heart' (Psa.66:18)--that is, wilfully & habitually do anything, either in connection with the work or otherwise, which is

against the Will of God--then we may pray & utter many words before Him, but He will not hear us.

This way of living brings the Lord remarkably near," he said. He is, as it were, morning by morning inspecting our stores, that accordingly He may send help. Greater & more manifest nearness of the Lord's presence I have never had, than when after breakfast there were no means for dinner (lunch), & then the Lord provided the dinner for more than 100 persons; or when after dinner, there were no means for supper (evening meal), & yet the Lord provided the supper; all this without one single human being having been informed of our need."

One time, it is reported that Mueller took one of the children by the hand & led her into the dining room, saying Come, see what our Father will do." The plates & bowls were on the table, but nothing else. There was no food in the larder & no money to supply the need. The children were standing, waiting for breakfast.

Children, you know we must be in time for school," said Mueller. Then lifting his hand he prayed, Dear Father, we thank Thee for what Thou art going to give us to eat."

A knock was then heard at the door. The baker stood there. Mr. Mueller, I couldn't sleep last night. Somehow I felt you didn't have bread for breakfast, & the Lord wanted me to send you some. So I got up at two o'clock & baked some fresh bread, & have brought it."

Mueller thanked the baker & praised God for His care. Children," he said, we not only have bread, but the rare treat of fresh bread." Almost immediately there was a second knock at the door. This time it was the milkman, who announced that his milk cart had broken down outside the orphanage, & that he would like to give the children his cans of fresh milk, so that he could empty his wagon & repair it. Things like this often happened at Mueller's orphanages.

During these years, apart from the work with the orphans, Mueller's Scriptural Knowledge Institute entirely supported six day schools catering to over 300 poor children, & assisted other schools with Bibles & Testaments. In 1840 Mueller decided to circulate Gospel tracts & books in addition to Bibles. By 1842 over 22,000 such publications were circulated, of which well over 19,000 were actually given away.

In October, 1842, a lady spoke to Mueller about five hundred Pounds which she had recently inherited. She wanted him to pray that she would be guided to spend it on the right thing. For a time Mueller prayed that this lady would be made so happy in the Saviour Whom she followed that she would be willing to use her money to support His cause. Then, in December, he heard that she had finally decided to give money to help run his orphanage. There was a big bill due in January,

so Mueller was very relieved at the news.

However, January arrived & no money had come through: Some difficulty had arisen about transferring it. So the lady's money could not be used to settle the big account after all. It was settled some other way.

Only in March did he hear again from her. The sum of five hundred Pounds was now waiting for him at his local bank, to be used as he saw fit. It was a colossal sum. There was enough in it to pay expenses in the three homes for more than a year. The work had rarely been so well off.

Just at this time, the housemother in Number 6 Wilson Street asked to see Mr. Mueller. She wanted to speak about Number 4 Wilson Street. Mueller thought the children had been up to mischief in the neighbourhood again, but it was nothing like that. The Grahams in Number 4 were going to leave, & had given first offer of the house to the orphanage. The housemother had thanked Mr. Graham, but told him his house was out of the question for the orphanage.

Mueller, however, was not so sure. A number of applications had been made in recent weeks which he had not been able to receive for lack of room. Also two Christian ladies had just been asking him if he had work for them at the orphanage. Again, would it not show the World that he did not regret beginning this work of faith if he expanded it now, in spite of these years of difficulty? And of course, there was the widow's five hundred Pounds.

But even all this was not everything to George Mueller. No matter how right a step appeared to be, he never took it without prayer. So for the next weeks, as he went about his work, he was constantly seeking confirmation of God's Will. Then something occurred to him. He had been given an opportunity to expand the work, in dependence on God. What if he did not expand? People would say that he had lost his faith. They would say that George Mueller had spent long enough living by faith--now he was afraid.

That decided him. Next day he called at Number 4. Mr. Graham did not give him a warm welcome. In the interval, he told his visitor, he had changed his mind--he wasn't going to move now. Mueller asked hopefully if Mr. Graham were going to look at all further for a new house. He was told that there was one week left before he had to make up his mind definitely.

Throughout that week Mueller prayed that God would find a place for the Graham family, so that Number 4 would become available. When the week had passed, he found himself again at the front door of Number 4. Mr. Graham was in a different mood this time. He welcomed George in. But Mueller only wanted to know one thing--were the Grahams going to leave or not? The answer was Yes, & as soon as

possible." That Summer, Number 4 Wilson Street became the fourth orphan house in Bristol which had been provided by faith & prayer.

During this period Mueller also spent a great deal of time in winning others to the Lord. Besides his Sunday services, he would sometimes resort to open-air preaching in Bristol. And for four months in 1845 he & Mary went to Germany & hired a carriage & distributed no less than 220,000 tracts in German, witnessing to all they came into contact with.

## Exodus

George Mueller was getting to be a big spender. Of course, he did not spend the money he was given on himself. He spent it carefully & prayerfully, supporting the cause of his Lord in different ways. But however much money he was given, he did not hoard it.

That is why he had not until now built an orphan house. Building a house requires a huge sum of money, so Mueller had instead rented the houses in Wilson Street. The plan to build an orphanage came in a rather roundabout way.

It all began with a letter Mueller got on October 30th, 1845. That was a Thursday, & he was so caught up with other things that he could hardly take in its contents at the time. But the letter was always at the back of his mind, & by Monday morning he had to take several hours to pray over the matter before God. The letter was from a man who lived on Wilson Street, & though he wrote in a friendly way, there could be no doubt that the letter was really a complaint. The people of Wilson Street were being disturbed by the noise of the orphanage. In other ways, too, they found it difficult to share a street with scores of lively children. Then too, with between 140 & 150 people living in the four homes on Wilson Street, there had been occasions when the drains could not cope & it affected the water supply. As to whether or not Mueller should take his orphans elsewhere, the writer left it to the Master of the homes to decide.

Probably Mueller would have liked to be able to burn the letter & forget about it. But he could not forget it. It seemed to him, though he knew the Lord had provided homes for these children on Wilson Street, that this neighbour did have some grounds for complaint. And something else entered Mueller's thoughts as well.

Perhaps he ought to move--perhaps the Lord meant him to. He drew up reasons. There was no room for children to play on Wilson Street. There was no land for cultivation. The houses were too confined--there was no room in these houses for a special place to nurse sick children. Also, the homes were in a slum area--might it not be better for the children to be taken out of such circumstances altogether & placed in a healthier situation? As Mueller thought the letter over, he concluded Yes, it is God's voice."

So he prayed his boldest prayer yet. In his prayer he mentioned that the homes would have to close, or be placed elsewhere in the slums, or else he would have to build new homes on an open piece of ground. He asked that, if it were God's Will, he would find a piece of land seven acres in size, so that he could build a place for about three hundred children. He also asked for ten thousand Pounds, a fortune in those days.

Morning & evening George prayed that prayer. He prayed it for thirty-six days. Then on December 10, 1845, another letter arrived. It was different from the one sent by the Wilson Street man. George knew now surely that it was God's Will for him to build a new orphanage altogether. This letter contained a gift of one thousand Pounds--the largest that he had ever received.

A few days later, Mary's sister came down to Bristol from London, & she had news. A London architect had heard of Mueller's work among the orphans. When Mary's sister told him that George was going to build an orphanage, he said he would superintend (oversee) the building without charging anything.

After that, things moved slowly for a time. Then, early in 1846, George heard about land for sale on Ashley Down. He went up to see it. It was on a hill, just outside Bristol, & there were seven acres of it. It was exactly what he had been looking for.

The next day, he went to see the owner of Ashley Down. He was not at home. Determined to find him, Mueller went to his place of business. But he was not there either--he had just left for home. Puzzled, Mueller prayed. In the end, he decided just to leave a note & not to follow the man back to his home; there must be some reason why he had missed him at both places.

So he went home, & all evening he felt he had done the right thing. I suppose George slept well that night. But the landowner did not. He lay awake from 3 till 5 a.m. He was thinking about his land, & a voice seemed to say to him, Sell Ashley Down to George Mueller." So he decided he would. But that decision did not come before the clock struck five that February morning. He would sell Mueller the land for an orphanage, and, more than that, he would sell at 120 Pounds an acre



instead of 200 Pounds an acre. This was the news awaiting George, when he found the businessman early at his desk the next day. It was welcome news, for George could easily manage 840 Pounds. At the selling-rate of the previous day, he could not have bought the ground.

Now Mueller had a piece of land, & an architect to plan & oversee the building. At the end of the year, he had received over six thousand Pounds to finance the building. Less than three years after that, the complete new orphanage on Ashley Down stood ready to receive its orphans. Every bill had been paid, & there were seven hundred Pounds still in the bank.

So from June 18th to 21st, 1849, all the children from the Wilson Street homes were busy packing their little bags. In batches, they lined up outside the old orphanages & began their march to the new one. Out of the slums they marched, & on till Bristol itself was almost left behind. Then they began to climb. They struggled up the rise till their massive new home loomed up before them.

What a place! Three hundred children it would take--one hundred & twenty from Wilson Street, the rest straight from the Bristol slums. As George & Mary watched them file through the doorway, their hearts sang the praises of the One with Whom nothing shall be impossible."

George Mueller was once asked if he spent much time on his knees. He replied. I live in the spirit of prayer. I pray as I walk about, when I lie down, & when I rise up. And the answers are always coming. Thousands & tens of thousands of times have my prayers been answered. When once I am persuaded that a thing is right & for the glory of God, I go on praying for it until the answer comes. `George Mueller never gives up!'

The great point is never to give up until the answer comes. I have been praying for over 20 years, every day, for two men, sons of a friend of my youth. They are not converted yet, but they will be! How can it be otherwise? There is the unchanging promise of God, & on that I rest. The great fault of the children of God is, they do not continue in prayer; they do not go on praying; they do not persevere. If they desire anything for God's glory, they should pray until they get it. Oh, how good & kind & gracious is the One Whom we have to pray to! He has given me, unworthy as I am, immeasurably above all I had asked or thought! I am only a poor, frail, sinful man, but He has heard my prayers tens of thousands of times, & He has used me as the means of bringing tens of thousands into the way of Truth."

Besides conveying Salvation to his listeners, Mueller also inspired faith in the many whom he came into contact with, or who supported his work. One manufacturer wrote that, prior to his first gift to Mueller

(5 shillings), he had been in considerable financial difficulties. A donation of even 5 shillings was a sacrifice. But after he gave that, things began to get better, & he then began to seek out others in need & help them, besides donating more heavily to Mueller. And during a financial panic in Great Britain, when others in his same trade were almost ruined, he had his most prosperous year ever! He ended by saying, But, above all, I have to thank God that my spiritual condition is much improved since I began to give."

### Expansion

Just a year & a half after he & Mary had watched the orphans filing up the hill to Ashley Down, Mueller began to think again about expansion. Why stop at three hundred orphans--why not go on to a thousand? Mueller still had a long waiting list, & he found it distressing to turn even one child away. He was well aware that there was no other home in Great Britain that would take in poor children without funds.

Others tried to dissuade him: They said he had reached his limit. But people didn't need to talk to George Mueller about reaching a limit. He knew that to set a limit to a work of God was to set a limit to God Himself. That George Mueller refused to do.

George made up his mind quite quickly, though he kept his decision to himself for a time. He would provide a home for a thousand orphans. As proof of his intentions, he began to ask for applications to fill up the places in the expanded orphanage. It was not long before he had a list containing three hundred & fifty names.

He had the names of plenty of orphan children, but he was receiving very little money to help put a roof over their head. He reckoned he would need about 35,000 Pounds in all. But, he said, The greatness of the sum required affords me a kind of secret joy; for the greater the difficulty to be overcome, the more it will be seen to the glory of God, how much can be done by prayer & faith."

Once or twice a good donation came in, but for the most part there was very little. However, the Word of God sustained him: He was thinking a lot of what was said about Abraham, After he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise" (Hebrews 6:15). After many months, the same God Who had supported the work with sixpences & shillings moved several Christians to donate together 5,700 Pounds. Surely this was a God Who knew no limits at all!

March, 1855, saw Mueller & a Bristol land agent together on Ashley Down. George was asking about a piece of land to the north-east of the orphanage already built. But the agent shook his head--the land was not for sale. George had had his eye on that piece of land for years, only to find that it wasn't for sale! He would see the owner, he told the land agent. But he couldn't do that, he was told; the owner was dead! George

was cornered for a moment. The owner had left in his will that the land could not be leased or sold for a hundred years.

Suddenly Mueller sped away from the land agent's side. Where is he going? Why should he vent his annoyance on me?" the agent thought. But Mueller was not a man to spend energy merely on getting angry. He was pacing, now this way, now that, in front of the orphanage. He counted 100 yards to this side, 200 yards to that. With an exclamation of satisfaction, he told the agent that he no longer required his services. He would build his new orphanage in two parts on his own land, one on each side of the existing building!

Mueller had known beforehand that this new project would cost 35,000 Pounds. Yet he had believed that his plans would materialise. By March, 1862, the two new buildings were finished. And he had received, for this work alone, not 35,000 Pounds, but 46,000 Pounds. Now Mueller had a thousand children of all ages who depended on him for a home, for every stitch they wore, & every scrap they ate.

Despite the burdens he must have felt, Mueller had an inner peace, a delight in God, cradled in the experience of answered prayer. I cannot tell you," he told a friend, how happy this service in which I am engaged makes me. Instead of my being the anxious, careworn man many persons think me to be, I have no anxieties & no cares at all. Faith in God leads me to roll all my burdens upon Him. Not only burdens concerning money, but burdens concerning everything, for hundreds are my necessities besides those connected with money. In every way I find God to be my Helper, even as I trust in Him for everything, & pray to Him in child-like simplicity about everything. I have found invariably, during my long life as a believer, that if I only believed, I was sure to get in God's time the thing I asked for."

### Boiler Trouble

While Mueller had patiently waited during these years for money to expand his orphanages, his faith had been tried in other ways as well. Just as the 1857 Winter was coming on, for example, the big boiler in one of the orphan houses began to leak. This was the only source of heating for the whole house, so Mueller began to fear that his children would have to endure a lot of cold. He went down to the boiler house. The boiler itself was not easy to get at; it was cased in a wall of bricks. Even to get behind this wall would take some time, Mueller thought. To replace the boiler altogether, of course, would take weeks.

Mueller was distressed to think of the children in their huge home with no heating, but he knew the boiler must be looked at before the weather got even colder than it was. So, asking God to help him, he arranged with workmen to call on a certain day.

As if to make matters worse, a cold north wind blew up, & all Bristol began to shiver. The night before the workmen were due, that bleak north wind still blew, but Mueller did not tell the men to wait for warmer weather. He had already asked God for that, & had added the prayer that the workmen would be made willing to work hard, so that the boiler would not be out of use for long.

During the night, the north wind died away. In the morning, a warm wind blew from the south. The weather was so mild that no fire was needed at all, even though it was December.

The boiler men worked all day. At half-past eight at night Mueller was on his way home when he was told the workmen's boss had arrived. He turned back, & went downstairs to meet the man. He was there to tell Mueller that his men would work late that night, & return early the next morning, when the men spoke for themselves. Were they refusing to do overtime? On the contrary, they told their boss they would work all night! Mueller's prayers were now fully answered & the fire was lit again in the orphanage boiler by lunch time of the next day!

The work of the orphanage went on as usual for the next three years, until George was handed five thousand Pounds. Of course he began to think, Why only one thousand--why not two thousand orphans?"

By January 6th, 1870, it was more than a thought--it was an accomplished fact. Now Ashley Down housed a small township of two thousand boys & girls. It was wonderful that Mary lived to see that day, for she did not live to see many more. It was only a month later that she died.

As Mueller thought back over their life together, he felt his loss to be unspeakable. How precious it was to him that they had been given twelve months of happiness in the year, & thus it was, year after year." Yet he conducted the funeral service showing that, in the midst of his loss, his faith in God was still the same. During his address on the words, Thou art good, & doest good," George said that, if it were the easiest thing in the World to bring his wife back again, he would not do it. (See Psa.119:68.) God Himself has done it," he said. We are satisfied with Him."

He then went on to witness to those at the funeral: As a child of God, & a servant of the Lord Jesus, I bow, & am satisfied with the Will of my Heavenly Father. I seek by perfect submission to His holy Will to glorify Him, I kiss continually the hand that has thus afflicted me. But I also say, I shall meet her again, to spend a happy Eternity with her. Will all who hear me now, meet my precious wife? Only those will who have passed sentence upon themselves as guilty sinners, & who have

put their trust in the Lord Jesus for the Salvation of their souls. He came into the World to save sinners, & all who believe in Him shall be saved; but without faith in the Lord Jesus we cannot be saved. Let all those who are not yet reconciled to God by faith in the Lord Jesus be in earnestness about their soul, lest suddenly a fever should lay them low & find them unprepared. May the Lord in His mercy grant that this may not be the case. Amen."

When Mary died, Mueller was almost sixty-five years old. This is the age at which most men retire, but George Mueller's most active years were yet to come. He continued rising every morning at half past six, & at a quarter to eight, after his usual period of Bible study & prayer, he began going through his correspondence. Then, at ten o'clock, he was helped by nine assistants, to whom he gave instructions. (Until the 1850's he had conducted a correspondence of about 3,000 letters a year without a secretary.)

#### Later Years

At the age of 65, when his orphanages were firmly established & flourishing, he began travelling from land to land, testifying of God's mercy & faithfulness to him. Mueller travelled two hundred thousand miles, through forty-two different countries. He preached to three million people in Europe (including Russia), the Mideast, India, Japan, Singapore, Indonesia, Australia, etc., & America, distributing Gospel books & tracts wherever he went. His audiences included the President of the United States (who invited him to the White House), princesses & nobles in Russia, & people of all classes around the world. The common folk always received him gladly." He had an enormous impact upon other evangelists of the time, too. When D. L. Moody went to England to hold an evangelistic tour, he went to Bristol to imbibe a heady draught (gulp or swallow) of Mueller's faith," he said. Spurgeon, a London evangelist, opened orphanages similar to Mueller's.

Of course, many interesting things happened to him even during these years of his life, but there is only room here for a few of them.

On one of his voyages to America, Mueller's ship was off Newfoundland, Canada, when a very thick fog came down. The captain ordered speed to be reduced. The ship went more & more slowly, till it hardly moved at all.

The captain was worried; he remained on the bridge himself for twenty-two hours straight. Suddenly he was startled by a tap on the shoulder. He turned around to see George Mueller of Bristol.

"Captain," he said, I have come to tell you that I must be in Quebec on Saturday afternoon." This was Wednesday.

"It's impossible."

"Very well, if your ship cannot take me, God will find some other means of locomotion to take me. I have never broken an engagement in 52 years."

The Captain protested that it was beyond his power to be of any assistance--what could be done?

"Let us go down to the chart room & pray," Mueller suggested.

The Captain looked at the stranger on the bridge & wondered if he were mad.

"Do you know how dense this fog is?"

"No," said Mueller, my eye is not on the density of the fog, but on the living God, Who controls every circumstance of my life." Mueller then acted on what he had just said, going on his knees to offer a simple prayer. In his prayer he asked that, if it were God's Will, He would take the fog away in five minutes.

The Captain thought to himself, That prayer sounds like something from the children's class, where the children are not more than eight or nine years of age."

Then his visitor was standing again, & the Captain thought he had better begin a prayer himself. But Mueller stopped him.

"First, you do not believe God will do it. Second, I believe He has done it, & there is no need whatever for you to pray about it. Get up, Captain, & open the door, & you will find the fog is gone."

The Captain got up & opened the door. The fog was gone, & Mueller was in Quebec that Saturday as he had said.

### The Tomorrow that Never Came

Sometime in 1897, an old man took up his pen & began to compile his yearly report. He had written many before, but this was to be his last. At the age of ninety-two, Mueller allowed his lively mind to roam back over the sixty-three years since the work had begun.

He had felt so sorry for the children of those Bristol slums. It had been difficult, but he had been determined to provide them with schools. By 1897, he had given 122,683 pupils a Christian education.

Over a quarter of a million Bibles, & almost a million & a half New Testaments had been distributed at home & abroad. Mueller was especially glad to recall how the Word of God had been distributed to the needy in Ireland, Spain & Italy.

For sixty-three years he had been praying for missionaries in many a dark corner of the globe. He had sent them money, too--over a quarter of a million Pounds. And it had not been in vain. He felt sure that, through these missionaries, thousands of souls had been brought to know the Lord Jesus. He was one of the chief backers of Hudson Taylor as he established the China Inland Mission, a pioneer venture that opened up mainland China & its teeming millions to the Gospel for the first time.

Of course, these & other aspects of his work had required a constant & increasing supply of money. Where did it all come from? Who was to receive the credit for it all? Mueller, in looking back, gave no credit to Man. When he had faced his many trials & difficulties, he had not looked to Man for support. Should he not now give the glory to Whom alone it was due, as he reviewed the support he had received?

How much had the Lord given him? One million, four hundred & twenty-four thousand, six hundred & forty-six Pounds, six shillings & ninepence. (Roughly \$2.5 million Dollars today, a sum worth well over \$25 million Dollars then!) Of money given him for his own use, he also gave away over 80,000 Pounds.

And how his mind lingered over the orphans! Many thousands he had cared for, but there was something more important to Mueller than the total figure. One thousand, eight hundred & thirteen children had left his orphanages declaring their trust to be in Christ alone. Some became preachers themselves, & one youth later became New Zealand's most popular preacher. (See our Family stats at end!)

To impressionable teenagers, the experience of living under the care of people with a deep personal faith in Christ together with the exhilaration produced when many of their peers came to share this faith was never to be forgotten. Many felt an enormous debt of gratitude, as did one Christian girl who sent this letter soon after going into domestic service as a maid:

Beloved & respected Sir, I cannot feel grateful enough to you for all the kindness I received whilst under your fatherly care in the dear orphan house. The years I spent there I can truly say were the happiest I ever spent in my life; for not only were we cared for temporally (materially), but spiritually also. I do indeed feel very thankful to the Lord that I was ever received there, & that He so soon brought me to a knowledge of Himself. It is my heart's sincere desire to know more of Him, to become more like Him, for He is truly to me the chiefest among ten thousand, & altogether lovely. . . . May the Lord still give

you more abundant answers to your many prayers for the conversion of the dear orphans, who still remain unconverted."

George Mueller's son-in-law, Jim Wright, was to succeed him in his work. By 1898, the younger man was afraid that Mueller was not fit for the amount of work he was doing. On the evening of March 9th, he pleaded with the lively old man to rest more, to stay longer in bed. In fact, he asked him to take a longer rest beginning the very next morning. Mueller's reply was typical: We will say nothing about tomorrow."

The next morning a maid knocked on his bedroom door around seven o'clock & got no reply. Opening the door, she took in his usual cup of tea. But he was gone: George Mueller was Home in Heaven.

The last time he had preached to his own congregation the text had been: For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2Cor.5:1). Now Mueller knew more about that than he had ever known before. n

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### British Money

\* Sovereign: A gold coin worth one Pound. Sovereigns were made for circulation until 1931, when Great Britain left the gold standard. Half sovereigns, two-Pound, & five-Pound pieces were coined.

\* Pound: The basic monetary unit of the United Kingdom, now equal to about \$1.80, although in Mueller's day it may have been worth \$10.00. A Pound was equal to 20 shillings or 240 (British) pennies.

\* The Guinea was an old English coin, equal to 21 shillings (now equal to roughly \$1.90.) It was first coined in 1663 out of gold from the Guinea coast in West Africa, & took its name from that region. It was the chief English gold coin until 1813, when the sovereign took its place.

\* A shilling was equal to 12 pence, & was 1/20 of a pound sterling. The modern equivalent would be nine U.S. cents.

\* The penny or pence" was 1/240th of a Pound, & is worth less than one U.S. cent. This British penny was stamped with a cross until about 1500, during the reign of Henry VII. The coin could easily be broken into four equal parts & was used in halves as a halfpenny & in fourths as a farthing.

\* Sixpence was a common British coin, equal to 1/40th of a pound (almost 5 U.S. cents).