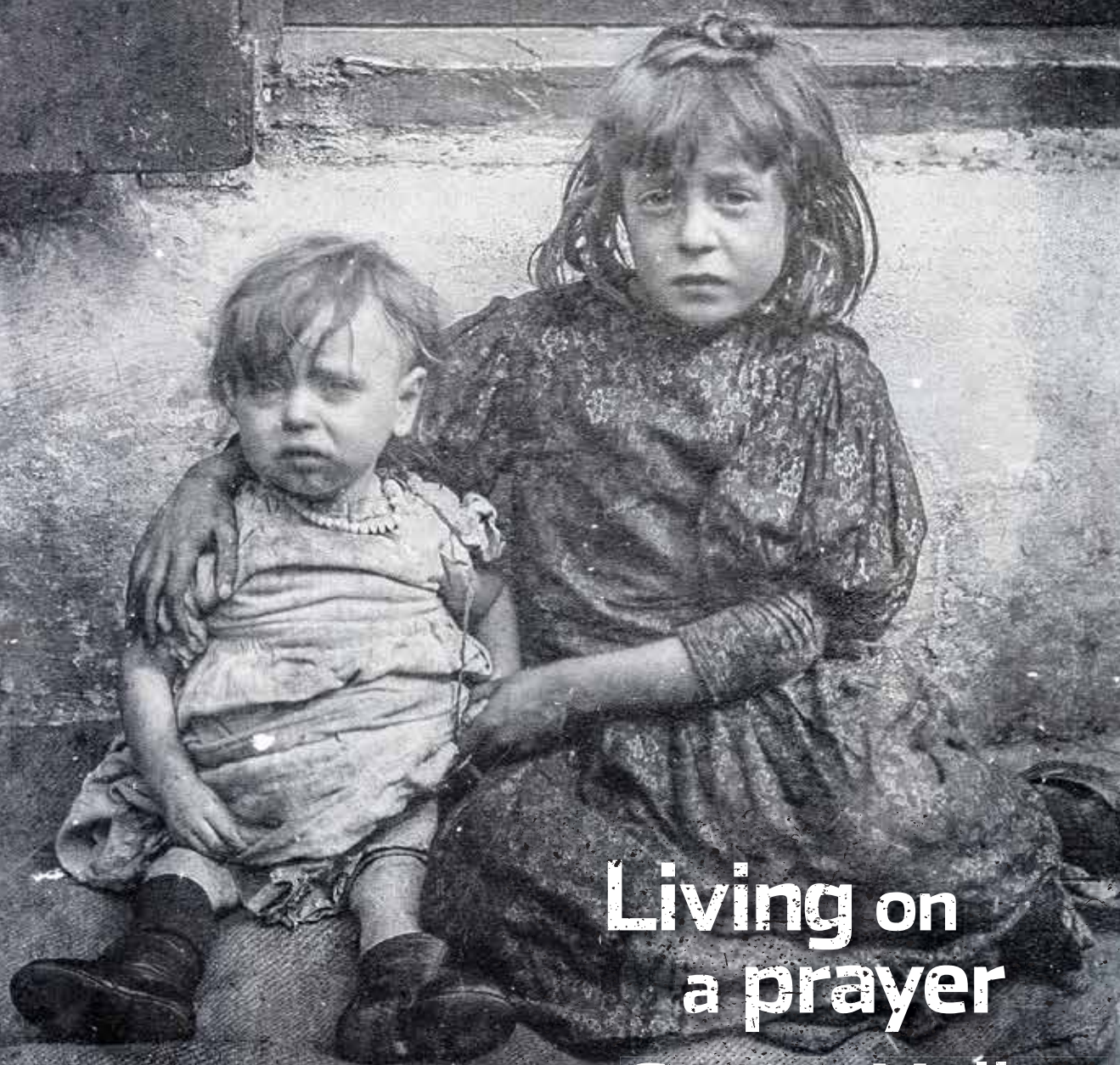


CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 128



**Living on
a prayer**

George Müller,
the Brethren,
and faith missions



Did you know?

ENJOY THESE CLASSIC STORIES OF GEORGE MÜLLER AND HIS INFLUENCE FROM *DELIGHTED IN GOD* BY ROGER STEER

TAKE MY MONEY, PLEASE

Müller decided to give up a set salary in 1830 and tell only the Lord about his needs. After he preached in Somerset, a congregant tried to give him money wrapped in paper, but Müller refused to accept it. The determined saint shoved the gift into Müller's pocket and ran away.

MÜLLER'S ORPHAN HOME MANIFESTO

"The home will only be established," Müller said in 1835, "if God provides the means and suitable staff to run it. . . I don't look to Bristol, nor even to England, but the living God, whose is the gold and the silver. . . There will be no charge for admission and no restriction on entry on grounds of class or creed. All [staff] will have to be both true believers and appropriately qualified

PRAYER Elisabeth Elliot, widow of Jim Elliot, meets with members of the Huaorani. Both Elliots had connections to the Brethren.

for the work. . . Girls will be brought up for service, boys for trade. . . The chief and special end . . . will be to seek, with God's blessing, to bring the dear children to the knowledge of Jesus Christ by instructing them in the Scriptures."

"TRIED IN SPIRIT"

One day in 1838, enough food was left for only one day—for 100 people. The staff, having given all they could, met as usual for prayer and went about their duties, but nothing came in. Müller returned to prayer; still nothing. How could he face the children tomorrow and announce no breakfast? He became "tried in spirit," a rare occurrence. Then the bell rang. The woman at the door gave enough to provide for the next day's needs.

A LAND MIRACLE

In 1846 Müller went to speak to the owner of the Ashley Down land. Finding him neither at work nor at home, Müller decided it wasn't God's will to meet that day. The next morning the gentleman said he had been kept awake all night until he made up his mind to let Müller have Ashley Down at £120 an acre instead of £200. "How good is the Lord!" thought Müller and signed an agreement to buy nearly seven acres.

FROM MÜLLER TO MOORHOUSE TO MOODY

In 1856 young Irishman James McQuilkin read part of Müller's *Narratives*. "See what Mr. Müller obtains

AND GOD PROVIDED By 1870 expenses amounted to £30,000 a year to feed, clothe, and outfit for service over 2,000 orphans. Here orphans celebrate the coronation of George V in 1911.

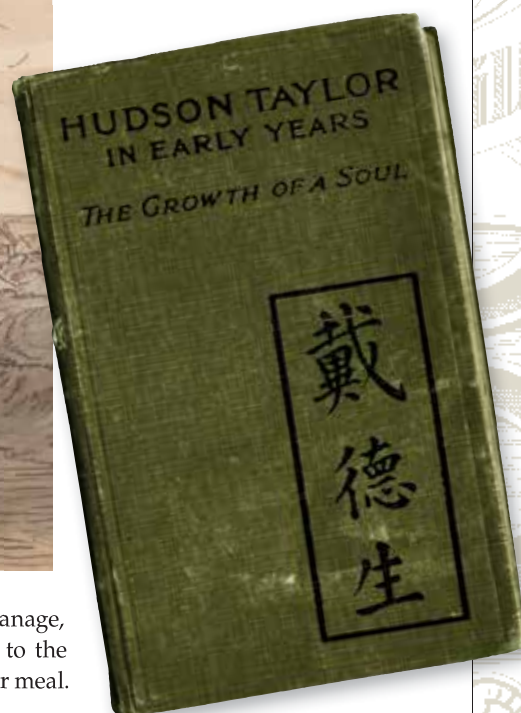


ELISABETH ELLIOT WITH MINTAKA—THE ROBERT CAPA AND CORNELL CAPA ARCHIVE
GOD SAVE THE KING—MÜLLER MUSEUM




FROM ENGLAND ... Above: Nineteenth-century Bristol became synonymous with Müller's work.

... **TO CHINA** Right: Hudson Taylor counted Müller and the Brethren as formative influences, and Müller supported Taylor on the mission field.



down outside the orphanage, and he offered the milk to the children, completing their meal.

MÜLLER'S SECRET

"There was a day when I died, utterly died," Müller once said, "to George Müller, his opinions, preferences, tastes, and will—died to the world, its approval or censure—died to the approval or blame of even my brethren and friends—and since then I have studied to show myself approved only unto God." 

We are grateful to Christian Focus for allowing us to reprint and adapt these stories.

simply by prayer," he thought. With some friends he organized meetings near Ballymena; hundreds prayed and repented in the streets. Revival spread to hundreds of thousands—including Henry Moorhouse who converted from gambling and drinking and met D. L. Moody in Dublin. Later Moody heard Moorhouse preach about God's love in Chicago, saying afterward, "I have preached a different gospel since, and I have had more power with God and man since then."

A MILK AND BREAD MIRACLE

One of the best-loved Müller stories comes to us from Abigail Townsend Luffe. When she was a child, her father assisted Müller, and she spent time at Ashley Down. Early one morning Müller led her into the long dining room set for breakfast but without food, praying, "Dear Father, we thank Thee for what Thou art going to give us to eat." There was a knock at the door; it was the baker, unable to sleep because he was sure the Lord wanted him to bake bread for Müller. "Children," Müller said, "we not only have bread, but fresh bread." Almost immediately they heard a second knock. It was the milkman; the milk cart had broken

... **TO INDIA** Müller and Taylor inspired Amy Carmichael, whose Dohnavur Fellowship began through saving Preena (*leftmost girl*) from temple prostitution.



Letters to the editor

Readers respond to *Christian History*



AS ALWAYS, WE LOVE TO BE ENCOURAGED

I have learned so much through your magazine that I never learned through church or school. It has been very enlightening. There's so much to learn and so much appreciation for our history as a

Christian nation and the world at large. The writers are so brilliant with God-given talents and gifts. —Kim Green, Boca Raton, FL

Thanks, Kim! We appreciate it.

AND WE APPRECIATE YOUR SUPPORT

I am glad to be able to provide this modest check as part of my support for the Institute. May God bless your work! —Reginald Mervine, Sterling, VA

Thanks go to you, all the editorial and administrative staff, the writers and the major donors who keep the magazine coming. Although I know that every donation is meaningful, those who are able to help significantly deserve significant honor. If there is a way that you can tell them that we know that it is their generosity that allows us to reap the benefits of the magazine, please do. —Arne Teigland, Carver, MN

We hope they are reading this very letters page!

TRIBUTE TO BILLY GRAHAM

I just want to write and say how much I enjoyed reading issue #111. The story of Dr. Graham was just wonderful. This dear man was loved by all. I have some of his books and enjoy reading them. He will be missed very much. May God rest his soul. —Lorraine C. Fisk, Morro Bay, CA

MUCH DUTCH

Like many others I too have all the issues of *Christian History* from the first to the present, and I greatly enjoy each issue. At times you encourage readers to submit or mention a topic they would like to see featured in CH. A certain Mr. Henry R. Styles wrote *The Ecclesiastical History of Kings County: 1628–1800*. It mentioned the first ministers of the colony of New Netherlands ... [including] the first church on Long Island, erected at Flatbush. ... This seems to be a fascinating story about the

early churches in this region and how it all developed further. —F. J. Antonides, Central Point, OR

We don't hear nearly as much about early Dutch settlers in the colonies as we do early English settlers, it seems. Next time we discuss the United States' colonial period, we'll certainly keep that in mind!

ON THE READING LIST

I am particularly touched by those in prison who write and you publish their letters. It's a wonderful magazine and over time I will gather lots of information to share with others. It's incredibly well written, and although I get behind in my reading, I do endeavour to devour every word. A big thanks to the team. —Greg Chamberlain, Singapore

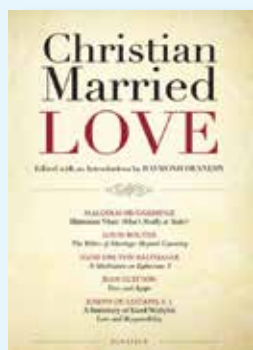
CARING ABOUT CARY

I'm delighted to receive *Christian History* and usually read it from cover to cover. Let me call your attention to one matter in your recent issue on "Baptists in America." Several times this issue refers to Lott Cary, a Baptist minister in Tidewater, Virginia, during the early 1800s who went as a missionary to the colony in West Africa later known as Liberia, and who was ably serving as governor there when he died in 1828.

Twice on page 18 this notable African American is correctly referred to by name. Elsewhere, however, his name has regrettably been misspelled. During Cary's own lifetime a Baptist deacon in Richmond, Cary's personal friend and colleague, wrote a letter to the editor of a Christian periodical, giving a gentle reproof for changing the way Cary invariably spelled his own name—Lott not Lot, Cary not Carey. —William N. McElrath, Honolulu, HI

How to spell Lott Cary's last name was a source of discussion throughout our preparation of the issue, given that his National Park Service plaque (pictured in the magazine) gives it as Cary, but modern authors generally spell it as Carey. Since the mission society named after him (<http://lottcarey.org>) spells it Carey, we chose to go with Carey. Prompted by your letter, we did some further research, which confirms your account and suggests the misunderstanding arose originally because printers assumed that his name was spelled the same way as Rev. William Carey who was contemporaneous with him.

GREAT BOOKS & FILMS ON LIFE, LOVE & MARRIAGE



◆ CHRISTIAN MARRIED LOVE

Edited by Raymond Dennehy

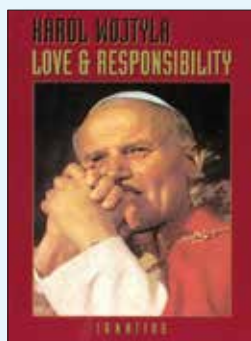
Five brilliant essays give a powerful witness to the beauty and truth of love, sex and marriage illuminated by *Humanae Vitae*. Essays by **Hans Urs von Balthasar, Malcolm Mugeridge, Louis Bouyer, Jean Guitton, Joseph de Lestapis, S.J.**

CMLP ... Sewn Softcover, \$15.95

◆ HUMANAЕ VITAE Pope Paul VI

The full text of the landmark encyclical reaffirming the Church's teachings against contraception, with his prophetic warnings of the disastrous results if we abandoned this crucial understanding of human sexuality.

HVP ... Softcover, \$4.95

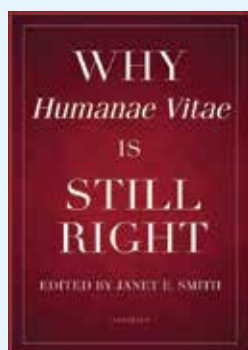


◆ LOVE AND RESPONSIBILITY

Karol Wojtyla (St. John Paul II)

This acclaimed classic is a remarkably eloquent and resourceful defense of Catholic tradition in the sphere of family life and sexual morality.

LREP ... Sewn Softcover, \$18.95



◆ WHY HUMANAЕ VITAE IS STILL RIGHT

Edited by Janet Smith

Sequel to Smith's classic with essays by numerous experts that give compelling evidence that Pope Paul VI was not just correct, but prophetic. Contributors include **George Weigel, Obianuju Ekeocha, Christopher West, Mary Eberstadt, Janet Smith**, and many more.

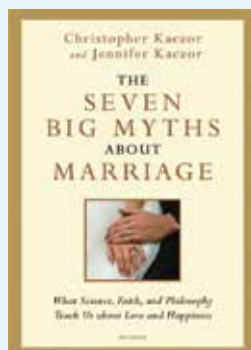
WHVSRP ... Sewn Softcover, \$19.95

◆ WHY HUMANAЕ VITAE WAS RIGHT

Edited by Janet Smith

21 essays by well-respected thinkers with inspiring insights on the truth of *Humanae Vitae*.

WHVRP ... Sewn Softcover, \$27.95

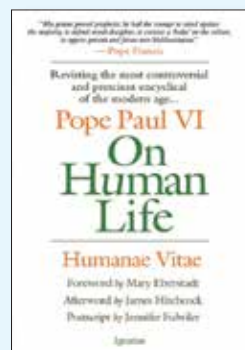


◆ THE SEVEN BIG MYTHS ABOUT MARRIAGE

Christopher Kaczor

This book tackles the most controversial positions of the Catholic Church—on contraception, marriage, reproductive technologies, cohabitation, and divorce—arguing for the reasonableness of the Church's views on these issues.

HMFH ... Sewn Hardcover, \$19.95

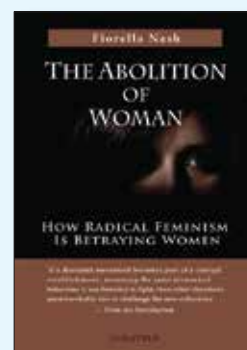


◆ ON HUMAN LIFE (Humanae Vitae)

Pope Paul VI

Presents the entire text of *Humanae Vitae* with in-depth commentary and insights from best-selling authors **Mary Eberstadt, James Hitchcock**, and **Jennifer Fulwiler**.

OHLP ... Sewn Softcover, \$9.95

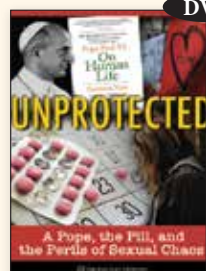


◆ THE ABOLITION OF WOMAN

Fiorella Nash

Revealing how radical feminism is betraying women, this is a rallying cry to feminists to stand with the pro-life movement and build a society in which women are truly equal and all human life is protected.

ABWP ... Sewn Softcover, \$17.95



DVD

◆ UNPROTECTED

Powerful new film reveals the devastating effects of 50 years of the sexual revolution and the counter-cultural movement today rising from its ashes. Features moving stories and inspiring commentary by **Christopher West, Jennifer Fulwiler, Janet Smith, Jason Evert, Sue Browder, Patrick Coffin, Jennifer Morse** and many others.

UNPM ... 80 minutes, \$19.95

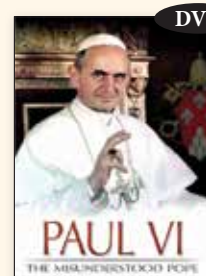


DVD

◆ MARITAL LOVE AND RESPONSIBLE PARENTHOOD

With approval of the Vatican Pontifical Council for the Family, this 10-part documentary series shows the beauty of conjugal love and responsible parenthood to achieve marital happiness. Experts from 30 countries explain how natural fertility awareness methods are ethical and effective for achieving or spacing pregnancy, and promote health and marital unity.

MLRPM ... 150 minutes, \$19.95



DVD

◆ PAUL VI: The Misunderstood Pope

Inspiring documentary on Paul VI, canonized a saint this year, who led the Church during a major moral crisis, guiding it through the chaos of the sexual revolution. His landmark *Humanae Vitae* reaffirmed the Church teaching against artificial contraception.

PAVIM ... 55 minutes, \$14.95



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Editor's note

I HAVE A FRIEND WHO PRAYS for toilet paper.

About 20 years ago, after we both graduated from seminary together, I went home to take up a pastorate in an established denomination. He set out to found his own ministry. Equipped with a little money, a business plan, and a lot of prayer, he said that his test for whether he was doing God's will or not would be that he wasn't going to buy toilet paper. People would give him toilet paper in answer to his prayers.

This concept was mysterious to me as a member of a church that always sent off missionaries and entrepreneurs with pre-arranged salaries. But off he went, and 20 years later he is still in ministry and—as far as I know—has never bought toilet paper. I asked him once where he got this idea.

"George Müller," he said.

That was my first introduction to the ministry of Müller, a nineteenth-century preacher, author, and orphan home director. He came from Prussia (modern Germany), settled in England, and devoted himself to a life of faithful prayer. He founded The Scriptural Knowledge Institution and then a group of orphan homes; both were intended to help those whom others had forgotten, but even more than that, they were intended to demonstrate that God is always faithful.

ASKING ONLY GOD

Müller didn't make budgets and speak to people about how much money he needed to carry out his plans; he didn't have a board of missions that issued him funds; he didn't send out letters begging others to supply his needs. He knelt in his house in Bristol with his wife and a few close friends and prayed—and people brought him money, bread, potatoes, clothes, apples, furniture, and just about everything else you can think of.

Müller didn't come up with this idea on his own; he was deeply involved with a group of people who

were dissatisfied with the church of their day. First meeting together in Dublin, Ireland—although they became more famously associated with the city of Plymouth in England—they didn't like the close ties between the Anglican Church and the English state. They wanted to meet together without the artificial divisions introduced by denominationalism, and they wanted to seek the pure unity of the New Testament church.

This group refused to take on a denominational name, calling themselves only "Brethren." (Today, in the United States, we usually call them Plymouth Brethren to distinguish them from the Anabaptist group called the Church of the Brethren.) Their influence was long-lasting, reaching out to touch such familiar figures as Amy Carmichael and Hudson Taylor in the nineteenth century and F. F. Bruce and Jim Elliot in the twentieth. And they bequeathed beliefs about how to read the Bible, follow God's will, raise money for the Kingdom, and interpret the signs of Jesus's Second Coming that have reverberated through evangelicalism for almost 200 years.

God's joke was on me, because a few years after my friend went off to found his ministry, I met—and eventually married—a man whose family ran their small publishing ministry on Müllerite principles. Also, although not Brethren himself, he had spent time in mission in Romania with the group. The concept is still challenging to me, but it isn't mysterious anymore. "Nine-tenths of the difficulties are over-

come when our hearts are ready to do the Lord's will, whatever it may be," Müller once said. Indeed. It's a lesson I am still learning daily. ■



Jennifer Woodruff Tait
Managing editor

Find *Christian History* on Facebook as Christian History Magazine, or visit our website at www.christianhistorymagazine.org. Find our daily stories at www.christianhistoryinstitute.org/today.

Don't miss our next issue, *Recovering from Modern Amnesia*, which will explore recent renewal groups seeking to emphasize classic Christian expressions of worship, prayer, and doctrine.

We thank the many readers who support this ministry, making it possible for us to provide *Christian History* in print. In honor of the legacy of George Müller, we have made a donation to Müllers in Bristol, England, where his work with the needy continues.

Please visit www.ChristianHistoryMagazine.org to renew or begin a subscription to *Christian History*.



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Delighted in God

THE PRAYER-FULL, FAITH-FULL LIFE OF GEORGE MÜLLER

Roger Steer

IN JANUARY 1822 a police officer looked up from his desk in one of the old half-timbered buildings of Wolfenbüttel. The once glorious medieval castle now served as the town's prison, where two soldiers stood guard over a handsome Prussian youth.

"What is your name?"

"George Müller."

"Age?"

"Sixteen."

"Place and date of birth?"

"Kroppenstaedt, Prussia, September 27, 1805."

"Is it true that you have been living in style at Wolfenbüttel and that you are unable to pay the inn-keeper? Is it also true that you spent last week at another hotel near Brunswick, living in similar luxury, and that when asked for payment you were forced to leave clothes as a security?"

The young man could say little in his defense; he was penniless and in debt. After three hours of questioning, the two soldiers marched him away to prison. The warden locked Müller in his cell day and night and gave him no work and no exercise. "Could I have

BIKE PARKING HERE Today, Wolfenbüttel Castle—where Müller spent time in jail—is a museum.

a Bible to read?" Müller inquired to help pass the time. The answer was a sharp "No."

PASTORING FOR PROFIT

In the silence Müller began to reflect on his life. His earliest memory went back to January in 1810 when, at the age of four, his family had moved from Kroppenstedt to Heimersleben where his father was appointed collector of taxes. Before his tenth birthday, he had begun to steal government money from his father. Herr Müller had hoped that George would become a clergyman: not to serve God, but to have a comfortable living.

In his Wolfenbüttel cell, George reflected on his five years at the cathedral classical school at Halberstadt and remembered—with some shame—a Saturday night two years prior, when he had played cards until 2:00 a.m. on Sunday morning. Then, having quenched

his thirst at a tavern, he toured the streets with friends, half drunk, before attending the first of a series of confirmation classes.

On returning to his rooms, the 14-year-old found his father waiting for him. "Your mother is dead," Herr Müller told him. "Get yourself ready for her funeral!"

In the 20 months following his confirmation, George spent some of his time studying, but a great deal more time playing the piano and guitar, reading novels, drinking in taverns, and alternately making and breaking resolutions for self-improvement.

On January 12, 1822, Müller's reflections were interrupted when the heavy bolt of his cell slid open. "Follow me. Your father has sent the money you will need," the police commissioner told him. "You are therefore free to leave at once." Herr Müller welcomed his son home with a severe beating.

Müller's great ambition was to enter Halle, the famous university that also happened to be the seat of Pietist theology and practice—a theology that emphasized new birth, personal faith in Christ, and the warmth of Christian experience.

Müller fulfilled his ambition in the spring of 1825, but the freedom of university life offered too many temptations; the 20-year-old was soon riddled with debt once more and had to pawn his watch and some clothes. He felt utterly miserable, worn out by his constant unsuccessful attempts to reform himself.

In one of Halle's taverns (where he had once drunk 10 pints of beer in a single afternoon), Müller recognized Beta, a quiet and serious young man from his old school at Halberstadt. Müller reasoned that a close upright friend might help him to lead a steadier life. And he was right. Beta led Müller to the turning point of his life at the house of Beta's friend Herr Wagner (read "Nothing but the blood of Jesus," p. 13, for Müller's own description of his conversion).

That night Müller became a Christian. The next day after his conversion and on several days during the following week, Müller returned to Wagner's house to study the Bible.

MISSIONARY VISION

In January 1826 six or seven weeks after becoming a Christian, and after much prayer, Müller returned to his father with an important decision: "Father, I believe God wants me to become a missionary. I have come to seek your permission as is required by the German missionary societies."



STUDYING—AND PARTYING Above: At the University of Halle in Wittenberg (pictured here in 1836) Müller studied for a divinity degree.



A YOUNG THINKER Left: This image of Müller comes from the 1830s, about the time he married and began his orphanage work.

His father exclaimed, "I've spent large sums of money on your education hoping to spend my last days with you in a comfortable parsonage. And now you tell me that this prospect has come to nothing. I can no longer consider you as my son!"

Müller returned to Halle and resolved to take no more money from his father for his remaining two years.

He also embarked on the task of proclaiming his new-found faith with the zeal that would characterize his life. He circulated missionary papers in different parts of the country, stuffed his pockets full of tracts to distribute, wrote letters to his former friends pleading with them to turn to Christ, and visited a sick man who eventually became a Christian.

However not all his early efforts at evangelism were entirely successful. He later wrote,

Once I met a beggar in the fields, and spoke to him about his soul. But when I perceived it made no impression on him, I spoke more loudly; and when he still remained unmoved, I quite bawled in talking to him; till at last I went away, seeing it was of no use.

In August 1826 a schoolmaster who lived near Halle approached Müller and asked him to preach in his parish. "I have never once preached a sermon," Müller replied, "but if I could commit a sermon to memory I might be able to help you." He stumbled through the memorized sermon early that Sunday, and repeated it word for word later in the morning.

In the afternoon he planned to use the same sermon a third time, but when he stood in the pulpit facing his congregation, he felt led to read from



DAILY WORK *Left:* At this desk Müller saw to all the business of the orphan homes.

BELOVED WIFE *Below:* Mary Groves and George Müller were married for 39½ years.



Matthew 5 and to make whatever comments came into his mind. As he began to explain the meaning of the words "Blessed are the poor in spirit," Müller felt that he was being helped to speak. Whereas in the morning his memorized sermon had been too difficult for the people to understand, the afternoon congregation listened with great attention to his extemporaneous delivery.

In June 1828 Müller received a letter from the London Society for Promoting Christianity

among the Jews (LSPCJ, later the Church Mission to the Jews). The committee had decided to take him as a missionary student for six months on probation, provided he would come to London.

Just one obstacle remained, however: every healthy male Prussian graduate was required to serve one year in the army. Müller had not yet done so. The solution to the problem was unexpected; Müller became seriously ill and was found to have a tendency to tuberculosis. One of the generals gave Müller a complete exemption for life from all military engagements.

In February Müller left Berlin for London, visiting his father on the way at the house in Heimersleben where he had spent his boyhood. After nearly a month's delay, Müller arrived in London on March 19, 1829.

Characteristically he worked hard in London: for about 12 hours a day, he studied Hebrew, Chaldee, and the rabbinic alphabet. But the long hours of study

took their toll, and the 23-year-old soon fell ill again. He felt sure he was dying, but an inner happiness prevailed:

It was as if every sin of which I had been guilty was brought to my remembrance; but, at the same time . . . I was washed and made clean, completely clean, in the blood of Jesus. The result of this was great peace. I longed exceedingly to depart and be with Christ.

But this departure was not to be just yet.

As he recovered Müller took his friends' advice and headed south to Devon for a change of air. And so it was that in Teignmouth, Devon, Müller struck up a friendship that would last 36 years and change the course of his life.

He met Scotsman Henry Craik (1805–1866) in the summer of 1829. Craik had also been converted while at university before becoming a private tutor in the home of Anthony Norris Groves. Groves had convinced Craik that Christ was speaking literally when he said, "Sell your possessions and give to the poor" (Matt. 19:21). (See "The simple standard of God's word," p. 29.)

Müller eagerly soaked up this teaching, describing his time in Devon as a "second conversion." Upon his return to London in September 1829, Müller shared his enthusiasm with his colleagues. He organized a meeting every morning for prayers and Bible reading, at which each man present explained what God had shown him from the Bible portion he had read.

Toward the end of November 1829, Müller began to question his association with the LSPCJ. He was coming to the view that as a servant of Jesus Christ he ought to be guided by the Holy Spirit in his missionary work and not by people. One of the requirements of the committee would be that he should spend the greater part of his time working among the Jews. Müller felt called to preach as the Spirit led and sometimes to Gentiles.

He wrote to LSPCJ and received a letter that pointed out politely that the society couldn't employ anyone who would not submit to its guidance. Severing this tie he was now free to put into practice his belief "a servant of Christ has but one Master" and to work whenever and wherever his master directed him.

AS LONG AS HE FELT GOD'S CALL

In late 1829 Müller was invited to become the pastor at Ebenezer Chapel in Devon, a call that came with a unanimous request from the entire congregation. After



a great deal of prayer, Müller agreed, making it clear that he would stay only as long as he felt God's call to minister in that place.

In 1830 Müller went to preach at Sidmouth and got embroiled in an argument about believer's baptism with three women. They convinced him that his childhood baptism was invalid. After studying the entire New Testament, Müller decided that baptism was for believers only and that total immersion was the scriptural pattern. Some time later Henry Craik baptized him, and almost all of his friends followed suit.

News of the able young Prussian spread rapidly. In the summer of 1830, Müller led Ebenezer Chapel to follow the example of the apostles in Acts 20:7 and observe the Lord's Supper every Sunday, although he admitted there was no specific commandment to do so. He also put into practice lessons received from Ephesians 4 and Romans 12 to

give room for the Holy Ghost to work through any brother in Christ whom He pleases to use. . . . At certain meetings any of the brethren will have an opportunity to exhort or teach the rest, if they consider they have something to say which may be beneficial to the hearers.

Throughout that summer Müller never refused an opportunity to visit Exeter. It wasn't only the beauty of the journey; the attraction lay at the end of the journey in the form of Mary Groves, sister of Norris Groves. Müller felt sure that it was better for him to be married and had prayed much about the choice of a life partner. Mary Groves shared his earnest devotion to the Lord and the conviction to trust God for material supplies.

MAKE THOSE SHOES, BOYS Above: In the early 19th c., many young orphans were sent to workhouses.

CLOSER THAN A BROTHER Left: Friendship with Henry Craik changed Müller's life.

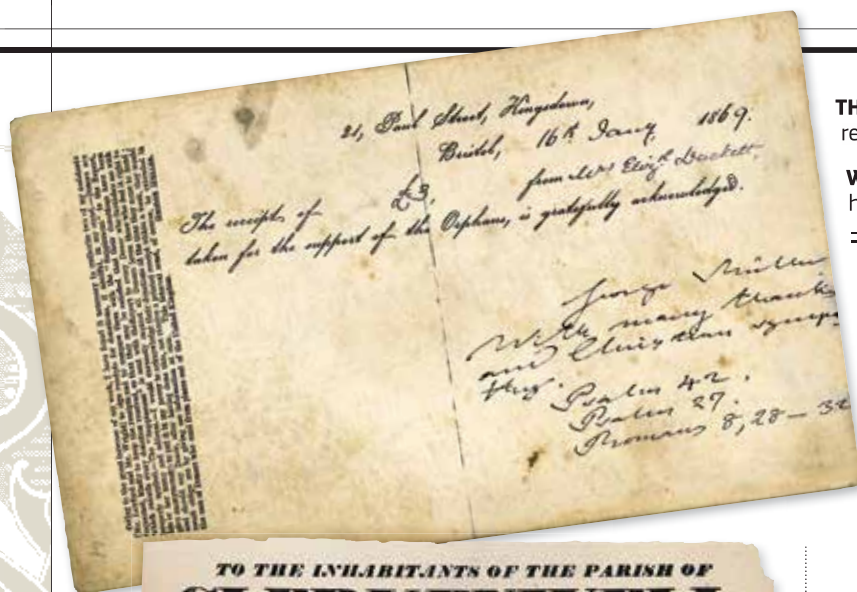
On August 15 Müller wrote asking her to be his wife; four days later he spoke to her in person. Mary accepted his proposal and they fell to their knees asking God to bless their marriage.

NO PEW RENTS

Soon after returning to Teignmouth, the newly married couple decided that it was wrong for George to receive a set salary. Müller abandoned pew rents (where people paid a set amount to reserve a seat in church) and made all seats free; at the end of October, he placed a box in the chapel with a notice saying that anyone who was led to support Mr. and Mrs. Müller might put their offerings therein. Müller also decided that from that time onward he would directly ask no one, not even his fellow Christians at Ebenezer Chapel, to help him financially in any way.

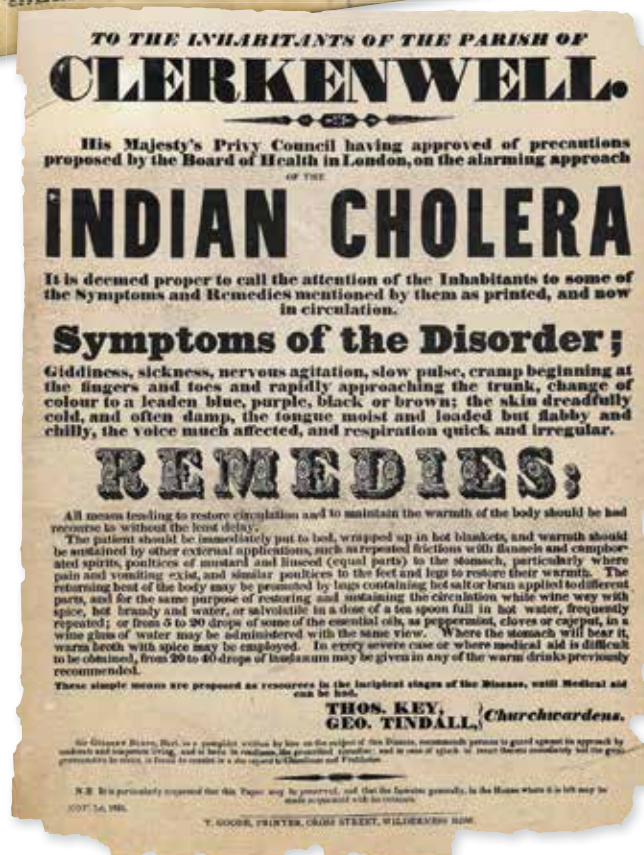
Soon Craik asked Müller to come to Bristol. On April 19, 1832, Müller preached the last of his weekly sermons in Devon, and the following day left to join Craik at Bristol to pastor Gideon Chapel.

The two men insisted on three conditions: that they would preach and work as they themselves interpreted God's will, not according to a fixed pastoral relationship governed by rules; that pew rents should be abolished; and that they would continue the practice they had



THANK YOU FOR YOUR £3 Left: Here is one of the receipts that Müller issued to everyone who donated.

WARNING! Below: This broadside gives instructions on how to recognize and treat cholera.



which still flourishes today. The three aims of the institution were (1) to assist and establish day schools, Sunday schools, and adult schools for teaching Scripture; (2) to distribute Bibles; and (3) to aid missionary work. Within the first seven months, SKI educated hundreds of children and adults and sent a thousand Bibles and £57 (over \$7,500 today) to foreign missionaries.

But Müller wanted to do more.

In 1835 orphanages supported by private charity were rare, and those that did exist were small and explicitly for middle-class children. When Müller first arrived in Bristol, he had been deeply moved by the sight of children begging in the streets, and when they knocked on his door, he longed to do something positive to help. But he had another equally important motivation for his orphanage work: he wanted to demonstrate the power of God to the world.

On the evening of December 9, 1835, Müller spoke at a meeting outlining his proposals for the Children's Home (see "Did you know?" inside front cover). The next day a friend arrived at the Müllers' home with three dishes, twenty-eight plates, three basins, one jug, four mugs, three salt-stands, one grater, four knives, and five forks. These would be the first of thousands of unsolicited gifts for the orphans' care.

Gifts continued to arrive in the new year. On the evening of January 5, Müller's house-bell rang. A servant opened the door, not to a visitor but to a kitchen fender (fireplace screen) and dish, left, no doubt, by a donor with strong views on anonymous giving. Müller was so encouraged by the support that in April he rented 6 Wilson Street and furnished it for 30 girls between the ages of 7 and 12 who would be trained to make a living in domestic service.

ORPHANS APLENTY

On April 11, 1836, the first children arrived, looking pale and nervous. In October 1836 Müller rented another house and furnished an Infant Orphan Home for boys and girls under seven. In June 1837 he opened a third home for about 40 boys aged seven years and above, partly because the need was so obvious but also because he needed a place to send the infant boys when they reached seven.

By the end of 1837, 81 children and 9 full-time staff sat down to meals at the three homes. There were enough applications to fill another home with girls aged seven and above, and many more applications

established at Teignmouth with regard to their financial support.

That summer cholera broke out in Bristol, reaching horrifying proportions by mid-August. More than 200 people met at 6 a.m. in Gideon Chapel to pray for relief from the suffering. In the midst of all this danger, Mary Müller was due to have a baby. As labor began she became very ill—though her illness was not cholera—and Müller spent a whole night in prayer. The next day Mary gave birth to a daughter, Lydia, who would be their only child to survive infancy.

In 1834 Müller and Craik founded The Scriptural Knowledge Institution for Home and Abroad (SKI),



BUSTLING AND BEAUTIFUL Above: Bristol was one of England's great port cities in the 19th c.

PREACHING THE GOSPEL UNTIL THE END Right: Müller preached his last sermon at this chapel on Alma Road in Bristol.



for infants than they were able to accommodate. In addition 350 children were taught in the day schools of SKI, and 320 children attended the Sunday school.

Müller's churches were also booming. When Müller and Craik had arrived in Bristol in 1832, they found fewer than 70 regular attendees at Gideon Chapel, and took charge of Bethesda Chapel as an empty building. During 1840 they gave up Gideon Chapel; Bethesda Chapel alone now had well over 500 members. In the next 30 years, the numbers would double to more than 1,000. American Bible teacher and author A. T. Pierson later described Bethesda as one of two truly apostolic churches he knew.

By the spring of 1841, Müller felt in need of a change. When a gift of £5 for his own expenses arrived, he interpreted it as a sign to leave Bristol for a while. So he traveled to Gloucestershire, where he began a new spiritual practice. Up until that time, he had been in the habit of getting straight down to prayer every morning. But while on this vacation, he adopted the view that the most important thing was to concentrate on first reading and meditating on the Bible.

In October 1845 Müller received what he described as a "polite and friendly" letter from a resident of Wilson Street complaining of the noise the children made (there were now four homes). After much prayer Müller felt that it was God's will for him to embark on his boldest venture of faith yet: to build a brand new home specifically meant for an orphanage. He asked his fellow workers at Bethesda Chapel their opinions,

and all eight agreed. George and Mary began to pray over the matter, and, as soon as they were sure that it was the Lord's will, they started to ask him for the necessary funds—at least £10,000 (equal to about \$43,500 at the time; it would be over \$1.3 million today).

In February 1846 Müller bought seven acres at Ashley Down for half the market value. It took four years to accumulate funds and to build a home for 300 children, plus staff and teachers. On June 18, 1849, the first excited children spilled out onto Wilson Street and made their way to Ashley Down. They enjoyed the sound of the birds singing, the sight of cows grazing in the fields, and the view across the valley toward Stapleton. Inside even the fresh paint and newly polished woodwork smelled good, and the whole place was bright and well ventilated.

EXPANDING FAITH

Just two years later, in 1851, Müller began thinking of expanding again, but skeptics doubted whether he could get support to double the work. But in the years

that lay ahead, Müller would startle the world by *tripling* the size of his work while continuing to rely on prayer and the gifts of supporters. On January 6, 1870, the last of Müller's great buildings on Ashley Down, "New Orphan-House No. 5," was opened.

During the final years of the expansion, Mary's health failed. Müller tried to persuade her to work less and eat more, but she said to him,

My darling, I think the Lord will allow me to see the New Orphan-Houses Nos. 4 and 5 furnished and opened, and then I may go home; but most of all I wish that the Lord Jesus would come, and that we might all go together.

Not many days after the opening of No. 5 in January 1870, Mary—now 73—caught a heavy cold that developed into a deeper illness. On February 6 she died. Müller knelt by the bed and prayed: "Thank

you for taking her to be with Yourself. Please help and support us now."

That same year he told his associate James Wright (1837–1905) that he considered it to be God's will that Wright should succeed him as the orphan homes' director. Eighteen months later, the newly widowed Wright also asked for the hand of Lydia Müller in marriage. Müller recorded: "I knew no one to whom I could so willingly entrust this my choicest earthly treasure."

They were married at Bethesda on November 16, 1871:

Wright was 45 and Lydia 39.

Wright later described their life together as a time of "unbroken felicity."

Several weeks later George Müller married Susannah Grace Sangar, a governess from Clifton about 20 years his junior. He called her "a consistent Christian . . . I had every reason to believe that she would prove a great helper to me in my various services."

Since coming to Bristol in 1832, Müller had preached almost exclusively in that city. But now several gifted and experienced men could shoulder responsibilities at Bethesda Chapel, and Wright had proved himself an able codirector of SKI and the orphan homes. After much prayer Müller decided

NEVER SAY DIE Müller maintained a schedule of preaching and writing well into old age.

to devote his closing years to a worldwide work of preaching and teaching. He and Susannah toured and preached in European countries as well as Russia, the United States, Canada, Australia, India, Japan, Egypt, Palestine, Turkey, and Greece.

In Greece they found time to visit the Areopagus on Mars Hill, and to stand on the spot where Paul preached his famous sermon (Acts 17:16–34). They explored the Acropolis and saw the ruins of the many ancient idol temples that had so stirred the heart of the apostle 1,800 years earlier. In 17 years George and Susannah traveled about 200,000 miles visiting 42 countries. In 1892 when they ceased traveling, Müller was 87.

TEMPORARY PARTINGS

During their travels, while at Jubbulpore, India, Müller learned that his only child, Lydia, had died on January 10, 1890, at 58. He described the news as a "heavy blow" but took comfort from Romans 8:28. The Müllers returned to England by the first suitable steamer from Bombay. Four years later, in 1894, Müller's journal notes without warning:

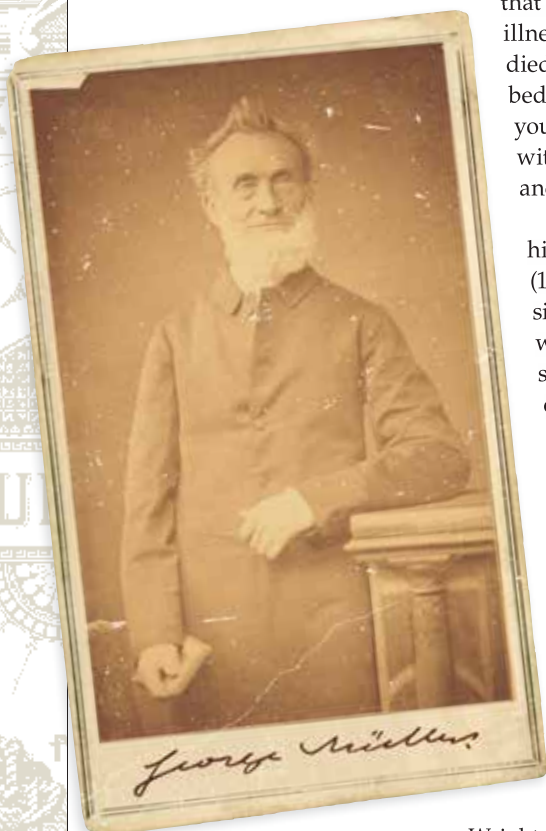
It pleased God to take to Himself my beloved wife [Susannah], after He had left her to me twenty-three years and six weeks. By the grace of God I am not merely perfectly satisfied with this dispensation, but I kiss the hand which administered the stroke, and I look again for the fulfilment of that word in this instance, that "in all things God works for the good of those who love Him" (Rom. 8:28).

Müller was again a widower.

On Sunday morning, March 6, 1898, he spoke at Alma Road Chapel on John 12, Jesus's Holy Week journey, mentioning Christians' bright prospect. The following Wednesday he told James Wright he felt weak and needed rest, but in the evening, he led the usual weekly prayer meeting in Orphan Home No. 3 concluding with the hymn "We'll Sing of the Shepherd that Died."

Next morning, March 10, 1898, he awoke between five and six o'clock, got up, and walked toward his dressing table. And then that bright prospect of which he had spoken in his sermon just four days earlier became—for him—glorious reality. George Müller saw his lovely One. ☑

Roger Steer is the author of the classic biography of Müller, Delighted in God, from which this article is adapted with the kind permission of Christian Focus. He has also written many other biographies of Christian leaders.



Nothing but the blood of Jesus

[Müller speaks of his conversion when he was a divinity student at the University of Halle.]

Now at a time when I was as careless about [Jesus] as ever, He sent His Spirit into my heart. I had no Bible, and had not read in it for years. I went to church but seldom; but, from custom, I took the Lord's supper twice a year. I had never heard the gospel preached. . . . I had never met with a person who told me that he meant, by the help of God, to live according to the Holy Scriptures. . . .

One Saturday afternoon, about the middle of November 1825, I had taken a walk with my friend Beta. . . . He was in the habit of going on Saturday evenings to the house of a Christian, where there was a meeting . . . they read the Bible, sang, prayed, and read a printed sermon.

No sooner had I heard this, than it was to me as if I had found something after which I had been seeking all my life long. I immediately wished to go with my friend, who was not at once willing to take me. . . . At last, however, he said he would call for me. . . .

We went together in the evening. As I did not know the manners of believers, and the joy they have in seeing poor sinners . . . I made an apology for coming. The kind answer of this dear brother I shall never forget. He said: "Come as often as you please; house and heart are open to you." We sat down and sang a hymn. Then brother Kayser . . . fell on his knees, and asked a blessing on our meeting. This kneeling down made a deep impression upon me; for I had never either seen any one on his knees, nor had I ever myself prayed on my knees. He then read a chapter and a printed sermon; for no regular meetings for expounding the Scriptures were allowed in Prussia, except [when] an ordained clergyman was present.

At the close we sang another hymn, and then the master of the house prayed. Whilst he prayed, my feeling was something like this: "I could not pray as well, though I am much more learned than this illiterate man." The whole made a deep impression on me. I was happy; though, if I had been asked, why I was happy, I could not have clearly explained it.

GOODBYE TO FORMER PLEASURES

When we walked home, I said to Beta, "All we have seen on our journey to Switzerland, and all our former pleasures, are as nothing in comparison with this evening." Whether I fell on my knees when I returned home, I do not remember; but this I know, that I lay peaceful and happy in my bed.

NEW GRADUATE This diploma from Halle is similar to the one Müller would have received.

This shows that the Lord may begin His work in different ways. For I have not the least doubt, that on that evening, He began a work of grace in me, though I obtained joy without any deep sorrow of heart, and with scarcely any knowledge. That evening was the turning point in my life. . . .

My wicked companions were given up; the going to taverns was entirely discontinued; the habitual practice of telling falsehoods was no longer indulged in, but still a few times after this I spoke an untruth. . . .

I now no longer lived habitually in sin, though I was still often overcome, and sometimes even by open sins, though far less frequently than before, and not without sorrow of heart. I read the Scriptures, prayed often, loved the brethren, went to church from right motives, and stood on the side of Christ; though laughed at by my fellow-students. . . .

It had 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, and 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. . . .

What all the exhortations and precepts of my father and others could not effect; what all my own resolutions could not bring about, even to renounce a life of sin and profligacy: I was enabled to do, constrained by the love of Jesus.

The individual who desires to have his sins forgiven, must seek for it through the blood of Jesus. The individual who desires to get power over sin, must likewise seek it through the blood of Jesus.— *George Müller, A Narrative of Some of the Lord's Dealings with G. Müller (1845)*





A substantial work

HOW GOD LED MÜLLER TO PROVIDE HOMES FOR CHILDREN

Philip Thomas

BY 1870 George Müller was overseeing five large orphan houses in the Ashley Down area of Bristol. Together these buildings could accommodate 2,050 orphans and the 112 staff members needed to care for them. Unusual for the time—and in opposition to the harsh treatment that occurred in workhouses—these orphans were not only fed and clothed, but also took part in religious instruction, exercises, and games, and were educated up to the age of 14.

At this stage boys usually left to start a trade apprenticeship with employers who had applied for an apprentice from the homes. The girls tended to stay in the orphan homes until 17 or 18, helping out with the daily housekeeping work while training for domestic service, in which many of them would find gainful employment.

Müller prayed with each orphan before he or she left, and every child, except those few who returned to their extended families, went off to work. They departed with a tin trunk containing two changes of clothes, an umbrella, a Bible, and a copy of Müller's biography. The homes paid both their train fare and the boys' apprenticeship fees.

This amazing ministry had grown from humble beginnings. Müller's life was a living example of the

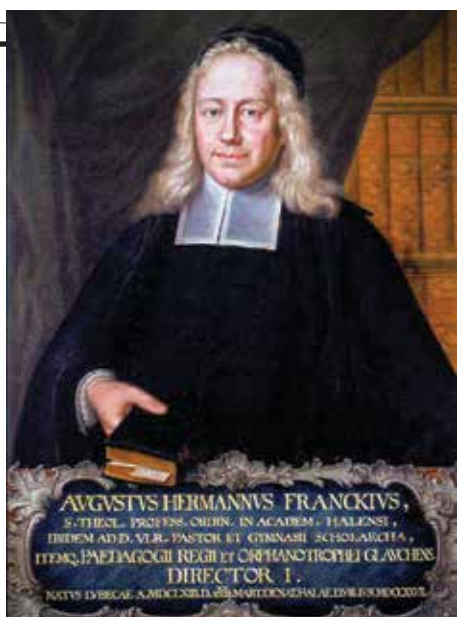
AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR Children and staff celebrate Christmas in an Ashley Down home in 1905.

verse he much prized from Psalm 81:10: "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."

Looking back Müller reflected how God drew him to certain key people and places at just the right time so that the Lord's work could be accomplished. His troubled young life is well known (see "Delighted in God," pp. 6–12); yet even as a new believer, the Lord brought him into contact with three influential people who put their Christian calling before all else. In these encounters the seeds of Müller's work were sown.

A TRIO OF GOOD EXAMPLES

The first of these influencers was Hermann Ball, described by Müller as "a learned man, and of wealthy parents," who had turned his back on worldly riches to work as a missionary among the Jews in Poland. Müller met him in 1826 shortly after his conversion. At that time Müller had given up the Lord's work for a youthful romance; he was afraid that the parents of the girl he was interested in would not let her marry a missionary.



But Ball's example inspired him to seek the Lord wholeheartedly and to put nothing before his place of primacy. Müller ended the romance, and it is likely that Ball's desire not to be conformed to the expectations of his class, education, and privileged background also inspired the young Müller to a similar resolve.

This resolve was certainly tested when Müller's father made known his displeasure at his son's hopes of becoming a missionary:

My father was greatly displeased and particularly reproached me, saying that he had expended so much money on my education, in hope that he might comfortably spend his last days with me in a parsonage, and that he now saw all these prospects come to nothing. He was angry, and told me he would no longer consider me as his son. But the Lord gave me grace to remain steadfast.

That steadfastness to God's call was a constant thread through Müller's life.

A second lasting influence on Müller's orphan work was Pietist author A. H. Francke (1663–1727), professor of theology at Halle University from 1691 to 1727. Not content to merely teach theology, Francke felt a desire to show God's faithfulness to his contemporaries. Street children in Wittenberg caught his attention, and in 1695 he decided to open a "ragged school" for them in a single room.

Within three years Francke was overseeing two educational orphan-houses (later known as the *Franckesche Stiftungen*), caring for 100 orphans and educating another 500 day-pupils on religious subjects. Francke's initiatives so impacted his colleagues that, by the time Müller began studies at Halle University in 1826, the institution provided free lodgings to young scholars like Müller. Francke's example of social care and trust in God for his needs lay in the soil of Müller's heart for the next six or seven years, before finally sprouting in Bristol.

FED, CLOTHED, AND EDUCATED Above: Orphan boys pose with their instructors at Ashley Down in 1935.

BIG INFLUENCE, BIG TITLE Left: The subtitle of one of Francke's books, owned by Müller, was *A public Demonstration of the Footsteps of a Divine Being yet in the World in an Historical Narration of the Orphan House and other charitable Institutions, at Glaucha near Halle in Saxony*.

The third influential figure was the man who became Müller's brother-in-law: Anthony Norris Groves. Müller first heard about this dentist-turned-missionary soon after his arrival in London in March 1829. He noted that Groves had felt called by the Lord to resign from his lucrative profession (and salary of £1,500 a year), seek only the Lord for his material needs, and take his wife and children to Persia to spread the gospel.

Müller recorded: "This made such an impression on me, and delighted me so, that I not only marked it down in my journal, but also wrote about it to my German friends."

"BRISTOL IS MY PLACE FOR A WHILE"

The inspiration provided by these three formative influencers—keeping God as the highest priority; social concern, especially for poor children; and trusting solely in the Lord's provision—had a lasting effect on Müller. He withdrew from the relative security of the London Missionary Society in early 1830, and in October 1830 he married Anthony's sister, Mary Groves.

The new couple soon resolved to refrain from receiving a salary, doubtless inspired yet again by Mary's brother. Müller kept this practice throughout his life, and it was a well-established habit by the time he moved to Bristol in 1832. After a visit there in April, he recorded, "I feel that Bristol is my place for a while." So it was to be; he arrived in



May 1832, and it became his home base for the rest of his life.

In Bristol Francke's influence on Müller emerged again. Cholera was rife in the United Kingdom, having arrived from the Baltic in December 1831. It had spread quickly, and by July 1832 the first cases of cholera in Bristol came to Müller's attention. The epidemic raged all summer, only abating in October; nationwide it claimed 55,000 lives. In February 1833 Müller read about the life of Francke, including Francke's orphan-age work, and took inspiration to increase his reliance on God to help the less fortunate:

The Lord graciously help me to follow him [Francke], as far as he followed Christ. The greater part of the Lord's people whom we know in Bristol are poor, and if the Lord were to give us grace to live more as this dear man of God did, we might draw much more than we have as yet out of our Heavenly Father's bank, for our poor brethren and sisters.

STIRRED INTO ACTION

On June 12, 1833, Müller felt stirred to provide education to those poor to whom he had previously given charitable assistance; this also followed Francke's example, and in March 1834 the work was begun. In November that year at a fellow believer's house, he saw a copy of Francke's biography on the shelf. Once again he recorded: "I have frequently, for a long time, thought of labouring in a similar way, though it might be on a much smaller scale." The following day he decided to stop thinking about this wish and start acting upon it.

Obviously there was a clear physical need, but that was not Müller's primary reason for establishing the orphan work. His *Narratives* record his main aim as being to strengthen his fellow Christians' faith. He cited different examples of believers who, in his view, would benefit from such a witness.



RISE AND SHINE Above: Girls at the orphan home make their beds in the morning.

PRaise FOR PENNIES AND POUNDS Left: Müller acknowledged every gift, no matter how small. This copy of a receipt was reprinted with his permission in an American edition of *Answers to Prayer*.

There were those whose lack of trust in the Lord's provision compelled them to labor long hours to make ends meet; those concerned about avoiding the poor-house in old age; businessmen who adopted worldly standards in their trade to succeed instead of trusting in God's provision; and those whose jobs forced them to compromise with the world but who were fearful of voicing their disapproval. To all these—and more—he wished to testify to God's faithfulness and trustworthiness, just as Francke's work had done to him:

I remembered what a great blessing my own soul had received through the Lord's dealings with His servant A. H. Francke, who, in dependence upon the living God alone, established an immense Orphan-House, which I had seen many times with my own eyes.

Müller's meticulous bookkeeping and recording of donations given in answers to prayer would also parallel Francke's narration.

On December 5, 1835, during his daily Bible reading, Müller was struck by Psalm 81:10. He began to pray for £1,000 and premises and staff to establish an orphan house; five days later he issued a press statement detailing his plans. Five months later, he issued a second press statement, this time to announce the opening of the first orphan house at 6 Wilson Street, Bristol, for destitute girls and his plan to open a second. On November 28, 1836, this second one (at 1 Wilson Street) was opened,

BELoved ADOPTED SON *Right:* When Müller was buried, Bristol turned out in force to bid him farewell.

"PLEASE, SIR, I WANT SOME MORE"

Below: Charles Dickens portrayed typical 19th-c. orphan treatment in this famous scene from *Oliver Twist*. Ashley Down operated in stark contrast.

and by April 1837 each house accommodated 30 children, probably with four or five children to a room. The following year 3 Wilson Street was opened for orphaned boys, followed in July 1843 by 4 Wilson Street for older orphan girls.

Accommodating so many children in terraced properties (Americans call them "row houses") on a residential street was not without problems, however. On October 30, 1845, Müller received "a polite and friendly letter" from a neighbor, explaining how the noise of the orphan houses inconvenienced some of the other properties. Earlier Müller had rejected thoughts of building a permanent establishment, but this letter provoked a reconsideration.

After prayer and reflection, Müller started praying for £10,000 (about \$1.2 million) to construct an orphanage. By February 1846 he had found land that the owner offered to him far below its market value. Although there continued to be regular tests of his determination to trust God for all the means for the work (see "Even the wind obeyed," pp. 18–20), he was well on his way. The "New Orphan House" at Ashley Down opened in 1849 and was followed by subsequent houses in 1857, 1862, 1868, and 1870.

THE FUNERAL THAT STOPPED A CITY


England's famed author Charles Dickens, in the 1857 collected volume of his weekly magazine *Household Words*, wrote in uncharacteristically understated tones that Müller "has accomplished in his own way a substantial work that must secure for him the respect of all good men, whatever may be the form of their religious faith."

George Müller spent many of his last years traveling in evangelistic work through the United States, India, Australia, China, and Japan before retiring home to Bristol in 1892. By that time the orphanage spread over 19 acres in five large houses at Ashley Down and involved thousands of pounds in supplies and many daily donations. Müller recorded in 1895 that the year's donations had included:

9,455 quarterns [3.5 pound loaves] of bread . . . 141 lbs of butter, 13 very large cheeses . . . 59 lbs of tea, 239 lbs of bacon . . . 72,648 apples, 7,037 pears, 240



lbs of cherries, 3,362 plums, 4,174 buns, 22 cases of oranges, a large quantity of potatoes, carrots, turnips, flour. [He added:] There were also two living oxen sent to be killed for meat.

Müller's funeral brought Bristol to a halt. Factories and businesses closed across the city, and thousands of people came out to mourn and pay their respects as the funeral procession passed by. *The Bristol Times* remarked that "he was raised up for the purpose of showing that the age of miracles is not past." 

Philip Thomas is training coordinator and lecturer in theology at Müllers, based in Bristol.



Even the wind obeyed

GEORGE MÜLLER'S TESTIMONY OF 50,000 ANSWERED PRAYERS

Dan Graves

ON OCTOBER 9, 1852, George Müller desperately needed money for his orphan homes and other ministries he operated. He wrote in his journal:

While reading the account about the Centurion and the raising from death the widow's son at Nain [Luke 7], I lifted up my heart to the Lord Jesus thus: "Lord Jesus, Thou hast the same power now. Thou canst provide me with means for Thy work in my hands. Be pleased to do so." About half an hour afterwards I received £230 15s [\$23,000].

Müller is famous for operating his orphanages while trusting God to provide for every need. What is less well known is that the same faith principle wove like a thread through his entire Christian life. As a result Muller could record many answered prayers.

After a vicious childhood and adolescence in which Müller disregarded Christ and even stole tithes, his heart was transformed in 1825 while attending a prayer service (see "Nothing but the blood of Jesus," p. 13). There he first saw a Christian kneel in prayer, a practice he immediately adopted. It was key to his success.

Müller set out to learn God's will but, untrained in Christian principles, he sometimes blundered. Once he bought a lottery ticket, assuming that if he won, God meant for him to apply to the Berlin Missionary Society.

A FILLED MOUTH Müller frequently received basic things in answer to prayer—like bread.

The ticket did win, but the society rejected him. From this he learned not to trust chance methods in God's work. Another time he wrote a wealthy woman asking for money, but another person answered the letter, sending the sum requested but urging Müller to seek deeper Christian faithfulness.

He took the advice to heart and learned to go to Christ for forgiveness when he slipped back into drunkenness, lies, and other sins. And he found power through prayer to quit his most besetting vices altogether.

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Increasingly as Müller learned God's reliability, prayer became his standard operating procedure. Cut off from his father's financial support, he asked the Lord to provide a substitute income. The Lord did provide, in the form of a tutorial job that enabled him to complete his education.

Soon the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews (LSPCJ), learning Müller was eager to work with Jews, invited him to come to England. However he could not accept because the law required

him to serve a term in the army. In answer to prayer, the Prussian army waived his obligatory military service, freeing him to go to London. His reliance on God further increased when he left the relative security of employment with the LSPCJ in 1830, a step he took because he felt obliged to work under God's direction, not according to human assignment.

Before asking Mary Groves to become his wife, Müller spent long hours in prayer, seeking inner assurance that she was the Lord's choice for him. The pair married simply, without lavish expense.

In Müller's first independent pastorate at Teignmouth, he took two more "toddler" steps of faith. Determined not to be merely a hireling in God's work, with Mary's consent, he refused a set salary and relied on freewill offerings. To his surprise he received more than his old salary. This stimulated him to give more for others' needs and to Christian ministries. He also refused to be bound by a set term of ministry, choosing to move whenever God prompted him. As it turned out, this was providential. In 1832 God led him to Bristol where he would accomplish his great life work.

FIRST BIG FAITH VENTURE

In Bristol in 1834 (about a year and a half before the orphanage plan), George Müller and a likeminded co-worker, Henry Craik, made their first big faith venture. For months they had wanted to increase the distribution of Bibles and aid missionaries and Christian schools. After much prayer they brought the matter before other believers and formed The Scriptural Knowledge Institution for Home and Abroad (SKI). Other ministries conducted similar projects, but Müller and Craik observed that these ministries did not operate by biblical standards.

Consequently the pair rejected indebtedness, vowed never to solicit money or endorsements from non-Christians, and refused gifts from people known to be in debt. They had no funds on hand and did not intend to ask for any except from God. (These were the same principles they would later apply to the orphanages.)

Despite these restrictions, SKI's work progressed steadily. Missionaries wrote that money sent to them arrived in moments of desperate need. Müller himself said, "The Lord pours in, while we continue to pour out." After 15 months he reported:

FRESH MILK *Top:* When the milkman broke down in front of the Ashley Down orphan houses (see p. 1), he might have unloaded the milk in cans like these.

SMALL CHANGE *Bottom:* Müller accounted for every shilling given to SKI and the Orphan Homes.



Although at times we have been brought low in funds, the Lord has never allowed us to stop the work. . . . The number of children that have been provided with schooling in the day schools amounts to 439. The number of copies of the Holy Scriptures which have been circulated is 795 Bibles and 753 New Testaments. We have also sent aid to missionary labors in Canada, the East Indies, and on the continent of Europe.

Müller would continue such reports to the end of his life with ever-increasing numbers, and he always faithfully accounted for every penny donated to the work. Money given for one purpose was never diverted to another.

A SINGLE SHILLING

SKI served as a training ground for Müller and Craik. Soon they tackled an even bigger task. On November 21, 1835, George Müller wrote in his prayer journal:

Today it has been impressed on my heart no longer merely to think about establishing an orphan house but actually to begin making plans. I spent much time in prayer to find the Lord's will in this situation.

Convinced God was in it, he announced his plan publicly, taking care not to play on emotions. One of the first gifts was a single shilling. The Lord sent other small monetary gifts, supplies, furniture, a house, and helpers. Soon the first orphanage was open.

God provided for the orphans again and again, often in unexpected ways—proving, as Müller had





hoped, that God is, indeed, a living God. For example in November 1838, the orphanage was in serious need. Müller wrote:

I felt that I needed more exercise, being very cold; wherefore I went not the nearest way home. . . . About twenty yards from my house, I met a brother who walked back with me, and after a little conversation gave me . . . £5 for the Orphans. . . . Had I now been one half minute later, I should have missed him. But the Lord knew our need. . . .

The following March, at another desperate time, a woman who had heard of Müller's work became convinced she had spent money selfishly. She donated her jewelry for the orphanage to sell. Impressed, Müller took one donated diamond and scratched *Jehovah-jireh* on a window pane: "God provides."

NO HUMAN PROSPECT

On June 13, 1853, the heating system needed repair, workers had to be paid, and money was lacking to cover regular expenses—at least £100 [\$10,300 today] total:

I had no human prospect whatever of getting even 100 pence—much less £100. In addition to this, today was Monday when generally the income is little. But in walking to the Orphan House this morning, and praying as I went, I particularly told the Lord in prayer. . . . And thus it was, I received this morning £301 [\$31,000] for the Lord's service. . . . I walked up and down in my room for a long time, tears of joy and gratitude to the Lord raining plentifully over my cheeks, praising and magnifying the Lord for his goodness, and surrendering myself afresh, with all my heart, to him for his blessed service.

Müller's testimonies may lead us to assume that he was a man with the gift of faith. He did not think so, and therefore often lacked confidence. Consequently he ransacked the Bible for promises and prayed them back to God. One of the Scriptures he often claimed was God's promise to be a father to the fatherless (Psalm 68:5). His usefulness came, he knew, from communion with the Lord. He said that had he not trusted God, he would have cracked under the constant strain of meeting the orphans' needs.



DO NOT FEAR Above: Müller even prayed about the weather—and once God held off a storm for him.


WELCOME HOME Left: This is how the Orphan Homes at Ashley Down appeared at the height of their use.

Müller learned to pray about everything: travel, bread, soap, illnesses, sermons, souls—and health. For instance, during an outbreak of measles in 1866, he prayed that the number of children sick at a given time would not overwhelm the infirmary, that none of the children would die, and that none would suffer permanent aftereffects. Although about 300 children became ill, Müller's three requests were answered. In answer to other fervent prayers, Müller also witnessed revivals in the orphan houses in 1857 and 1872.

A BLEAK NORTH WIND

Near the end of his life, Müller calculated 50,000 distinct answers to prayer—almost two a day after his conversion in 1825. When he didn't pray, he failed. Instead of taking time to pray before one trip—despite knowing he should—he chatted with believers until it was time to leave. Consequently he found himself unable to speak to anyone in the coach about Christ or even to pass out tracts, as was his custom.

When Müller *did* pray, he frequently testified that God answered in marvelous ways. In December 1857 a boiler in one orphanage began to leak. It had to be repaired, but during the work there would be no heat and the small children would suffer. A day was set for repairs. Then a bleak north wind set in.

Müller asked the Lord to stop the north wind and give the workers "a mind to work." The wind veered to the south and, unsolicited, the workers volunteered to work all night to finish the job. As Müller confirmed daily, even the wind obeys the Lord. 

Dan Graves is the layout editor for Christian History and writes CHI's "This Day in Christian History" feature.

“Ready to do the Lord’s will”

How to ascertain the will of God, according to Müller

1. I seek at the beginning to get my heart into such a state that it has no will of its own in regard to a given matter. Nine-tenths of the trouble with people generally is just here. Nine-tenths of the difficulties are overcome when our hearts are ready to do the Lord’s will, whatever it may be...

2. Having done this, I do not leave the result to feeling or simple impression. If so, I make myself liable to great delusions.

3. I seek the Will of the Spirit of God through, or in connection with, the Word of God. The Spirit and the Word must be combined. If I look to the Spirit alone without the Word, I lay myself open to great delusions also. If the Holy Ghost guides us at all, He will do it according to the Scriptures and never contrary to them.

4. Next I take into account providential circumstances. These often plainly indicate God’s Will in connection with His Word and Spirit.

5. I ask God in prayer to reveal His Will to me aright.

6. Thus, through prayer to God, the study of the Word, and reflection, I come to a deliberate judgment according to the best of my ability and knowledge, and if my mind is thus at peace, and continues so after two or three more petitions, I proceed accordingly. In trivial matters, and in transactions involving most important issues, I have found this method always effective.—*from Answers to Prayer from George Müller’s Narratives (1895), an American compilation authorized by Müller*

FAITH IN ACTION

Some excerpts from Müller’s 1838 journal show answers to his prayers:

July 12, 1838: I gave myself to prayer with brother T— of the Boys’ Orphan-House, who had called on me, and who, besides my wife, and brother Craik, is the only individual to whom I speak about the state of the funds. While we were praying, an orphan child from Frome was brought, and some believers at Frome, having collected among them £5, sent this money with the child. Thus we received the first answer at a time of need.

Aug. 18: I have not one penny in hand for the Orphans. In a day or two again many pounds will be needed. My eyes are up to the Lord. Evening. Before this day is over, I have received from a sister £5. She had some

FROM MOODY BACK TO MÜLLER Moody Press reprinted parts of Müller’s *Narratives* for an American audience in 1897.

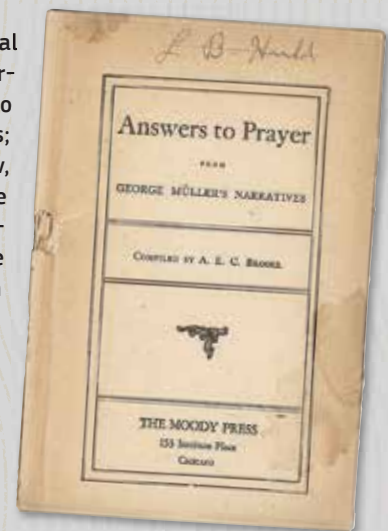
time since put away her trinkets, to be sold for the benefit of the Orphans. . . . May my soul be greatly encouraged by this fresh token of my gracious Lord’s faithfulness!

Aug. 20: . . . Today I was again penniless. But . . . I gave myself to prayer this morning, knowing that I should want again this week at least £13, if not above £20. Today I received £12 in answer to prayer, from a lady who is staying at Clifton, whom I had never seen before. Adorable Lord, grant that this may be a fresh encouragement to me.

Aug. 23: Today I was again without one single penny, when £3 was sent from Clapham, with a box of new clothes for the Orphans.

Sept. 5: Our hour of trial continues still. The Lord mercifully has given enough to supply our daily necessities; but He gives by the day now, and almost by the hour, as we need it. Nothing came in yesterday. I have besought the Lord again and again, both yesterday and today. It is as if the Lord said: “Mine hour is not yet come.” But I have faith in God. I believe that He surely will send help, though I know not whence it is to come. Many pounds are needed within a few days, and there is not a penny in hand. This morning £2 was given for the present necessities by one of the laborers in the work.

Sept. 6: This morning the books were brought from the Infant Orphan-House, and the matron sent to ask . . . when money would be advanced for housekeeping. I said “tomorrow,” though I had not a single penny in hand. About an hour after, brother T— sent me a note, to say that he had received £1 this morning, and that last evening a brother had sent 29 lbs. of salt, 44 dozen of onions, and 26 lbs. of groats.—*from A Narrative of Some of the Lord’s Dealings with George Müller, Second Part (1841)*



FROM ORPHANS TO MARTYRS

1805 George Müller is born in Kroppenstaedt, Prussia.

1819 Müller's mother dies.

1821 At the age of only 16, Müller spends five weeks in prison for debt.

1825 Müller enrolls at Halle University to study theology; his friend Beta takes him to a Bible study after which he becomes a Christian.

Anthony Norris Groves publishes *Christian Devotedness*.



Lydia Müller Wright

1826 Müller decides to become a missionary. Refusing to accept his father's money, at one point he lives for two months in free lodgings in an orphan house built by Augustus Francke.

John Nelson Darby is ordained a priest in the Church of Ireland (Anglican) and obtains a parish.

1827 Groves gives up on his plan to seek Anglican ordination and serve with the Church Missionary Society; he begins to meet with other believers to break bread and study the Scriptures.

Darby suffers a riding accident and has a new assurance of faith during his recovery.

1829 Müller moves to London to train for missionary work. He becomes ill and goes to Teignmouth, Devon, for rest and meets Henry Craik. Invited to become minister of Ebenezer Chapel, he moves to Devon.

Groves goes to Baghdad as a missionary; later he will move to India.

1830 Müller marries Mary Groves. He renounces his regular salary and eliminates the renting of church pews at Ebenezer.

1831 Theodosia Wingfield Powercourt organizes a series of prophecy conferences at her estate in Enniskerry where Darby speaks.

G. V. Wigram begins to hold prophecy conferences in Plymouth, England.

1832 Müller moves to Bristol to serve with Craik as pastors of Gideon Chapel and Bethesda Chapel; George and Mary's daughter Lydia is born.

Benjamin Wills Newton and others begin meeting to break bread without denominational allegiance in Plymouth.

1834 George and Mary's son, Elijah, is born, but lives only 15 months.



Wolfenbüttel

Müller founds The Scriptural Knowledge Institution to support missionaries at home and abroad, provide a source of cheap Bibles and tracts, and support day schools and Sunday schools for adults and children.

1835 Müller feels led to start an orphanage because of a worsening cholera epidemic and the increasing number of orphaned children who are forced into the workhouse or the streets.



George Müller in his study

1836 First Orphan Homes are opened on Wilson Street, Bristol. The first 30 female orphans live in the Müllers' own home. Later another home is acquired for boys and girls under the age of seven.

1837 Third Wilson Street home is opened to accommodate boys seven and up. By now there are 64 children.

1840 Craik and Müller focus solely on preaching at Bethesda Chapel; Müller will continue preaching and leading there until his death.

There are now about 200 Brethren assemblies in Britain and Ireland operating as an informal network.

1845 Müller receives a letter of complaint from the neighbors about the noise caused by the orphans (now numbering about 130).

1846 Müller buys land at Ashley Down. He does not allow building to begin until he has all of the money to complete the project.

1847 Building starts on Ashley Down. The architect commissioned to draw up the plans asks if he might do so free of charge.

1848 The Brethren split into "Open" and "Exclusive" groups over the willingness of Bethesda Chapel to receive believers from Benjamin Newton's assembly. Müller associates with the Open Brethren, and Darby with the Exclusive Brethren.

THE INFLUENCE OF MÜLLER, HIS FRIENDS, AND HIS MOVEMENT Was long-lasting.

Timeline adapted from
Müllers.org and other sources.

The Exclusive group refuses to receive into fellowship in any of their assemblies anyone who has been disfellowshipped from another assembly.

1849 The first home at Ashley Down is opened, accommodating 300 children in dormitories. Each house has its own dining room and its own infirmary.

1851 Müller makes the decision to expand; there are 78 children on the waiting list.

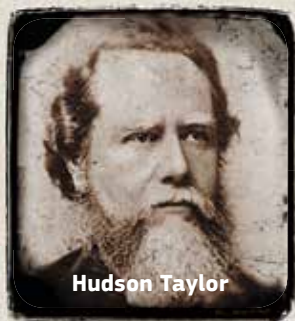
1852-53 Hudson Taylor is baptized in an Open Brethren assembly in Hull and begins to study medicine.

1854 Work starts on the second orphan house at Ashley Down.

Taylor arrives in China for the first time.

1857 Work on Orphan House Number 2 at Ashley Down is completed.

1858 Work begins on Orphan House Number 3.



Hudson Taylor

1861 Müller decides to accommodate 2,000 orphaned children. He acquires more land for the building of two more houses.

1862 House Number 3 is completed, housing another 450 children. Capacity is now 1,150 children.

1865 Taylor publishes *China's Spiritual Need and Claims* and founds the China Inland Mission.



Francke's orphanage

1868 A further 450 orphans are accommodated in Orphan House Number 4, bringing the total number of orphans cared for at Ashley Down to 1,600.

1870 House Number 5 is completed; Ashley Down can now house up to 2,050 children. Mary Müller dies; James Wright is appointed assistant and successor to George Müller.

1871 James Wright marries Lydia, the Müllers' only surviving child. George Müller marries Susannah Grace Sanger.

1875 Müller begins 17 years of missionary travel at age 70. He will travel over 200,000 miles, address over 3 million people, and preach in 42 countries.

1890 Lydia (Müller) Wright dies.

Darby publishes his new translation of the Bible.

1892 Amy Carmichael, influenced by both Müller and Taylor, offers herself for the China Inland Mission but is refused because of her health. She will briefly go to Japan with the Church Missionary Society.

1894 Susannah Müller dies.

1895 Carmichael goes to India.

1898 George Müller dies in Bristol.

1901 Carmichael begins work in Dohnavur.

1909 Cyrus Scofield publishes the *Scofield Reference Bible*, which popularizes Darby's theology.

1913 Harold St. John becomes a Brethren missionary in Brazil.

1920 Watchman Nee becomes a Christian in China. Through his mentor, Margaret Barber, he is introduced to many Brethren authors.

1925 Carmichael begins to support her work on the faith mission principle.

1927 Carmichael's Dohnavur Fellowship is registered.

1930 Famous evangelist Harry Ironside becomes pastor of Moody Church in Chicago; he retains fellowship with the Brethren despite their teaching that "pastor" is not a necessary office for Christians.

1931 Carmichael, seriously injured, begins a ministry of writing.

1943 Brethren scholar F. F. Bruce publishes the popular and influential book *Are the New Testament Documents Reliable?*

1950 Missionary nurse and Brethren author Patricia St. John, daughter of Harold, publishes her best-known work, *Treasures of the Snow*.

1952 Brethren missionaries Jim and Elisabeth Elliot go to Ecuador.

Chinese Communists arrest Watchman Nee who will remain in prison until his death 20 years later.

1956 Jim Elliot is killed in Ecuador.





Müller and friends

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BRETHERN

Tim Grass

IN 1828 TWO WELL-OFF YOUNG MEN, a dentist and a lawyer, walked along Lower Pembroke Street in the heart of Dublin, speaking earnestly about a group of Christians from various churches who had begun meeting privately. The dentist, Anthony Norris Groves (1795–1853), suggested to the lawyer, John Gifford Bellett (1795–1864), that God wanted the little company to come together in all simplicity as disciples, not waiting on any pulpit or minister, but trusting that the Lord would edify us together, by ministering as He pleased and saw good from the midst of ourselves.

Many years later Bellett could still point out the spot; for him, it was “the birth place of my mind.”

BROAD AND PURE

Groves expressed the motivation of the pioneers of the so-called Plymouth Brethren. In search of simplicity and unity, they sought a fellowship broad enough to embrace all believers in Christ and yet pure enough to exclude churchgoers lacking a living faith. Their vision was to provide a fellowship in which all true believers could worship together around the Lord’s table and

FOUNDING CITY Though some would call the new group “Plymouth Brethren,” it actually began in Dublin (*above*).

could study the Scriptures without being divided by denominational allegiance.

Small groups of seceders from established groups with this aim popped up in Dublin and the north of Ireland. All believed that the Bible offered the best pattern for ordering church life, taking the unofficial name “Brethren.”

In the late 1820s, three important groups emerged in Dublin. The first centered on Edward Cronin (1801–1882), a Catholic who had become Independent (Congregational) after an evangelical conversion. When he moved to Dublin in 1826, he was told he couldn’t take Communion regularly unless he joined a local Independent church. He refused, believing that what was necessary was membership in Christ’s body rather than in a local congregation. His “growing feeling of opposition to one man ministry” led him to stop attending church altogether: “To avoid the appearance of evil, I spent many a Lord’s-day morning under a tree or under a haystack during the time of service.” With

GRACIOUS ASSISTANCE Lady Powerscourt opened her home (*right*) to conferences on prophecy attended by leaders like Darby, Groves, and Bellett (*below*).

others he began to “break bread” in the back parlor of his house.

Meanwhile a group of Anglicans and Nonconformists (Protestants who did not “conform” to the Church of England) sought to share Communion together. With the financial support of John Vesey Parnell, later Lord Congleton (1805–1883), they began meeting.

A third group centered on Anglican Evangelicals (modern historians tend to capitalize the word when it refers to this specific faction). Among them were Bellett and Groves. Groves was preparing to go to Baghdad as a missionary and had offered himself for service with the Anglican Church Missionary Society (CMS). For this assignment Anglican ordination was required, and he stayed at Bellett’s house when visiting Dublin for examinations at Trinity College.

But in 1827 a burglar stole the money he had set aside for his next trip, and Groves took this as divine guidance to withdraw from his course. He was still keen to go to Baghdad as a layman, but the CMS told him that without ordination he would be unable to celebrate the Lord’s Supper. Groves concluded that “ordination of any kind to preach the gospel is no requirement of Scripture.” He withdrew from the CMS but continued with his missionary plan.

How these three groups came together is not clear, but by 1830 they were meeting as one in a rented auction room in Dublin. Their main burden was what they saw as the unscriptural nature of “special membership” in a denomination; this belief resulted in their being shunned as “Evangelical malcontents.”

SERVANTS OF THE STATE

At some point John Nelson Darby (1800–1882), a clergyman in Powerscourt, south of Dublin, made contact with the group. His parish included Protestant gentry, many influenced by Anglican Evangelicals, but also poor Catholic agricultural laborers. They became Darby’s responsibility, and he wore himself out in ministry to them.

In October 1826 the Anglican archbishop of Dublin, William Magee, issued a charge to his clergy that portrayed them as servants of the state as well as the church. Catholics protested; Anglican clergy sought state protection; and early in 1827 Magee imposed oaths of supremacy and allegiance on prospective converts, which upset Darby greatly.



These oaths acknowledged the British monarch as head of state and supreme governor of the Church of England and Ireland, and abjured allegiance to other rulers, including the pope. Darby saw this as the church seeking the support of worldly government. He published a pamphlet stating his objections and asserting that the church as a heavenly entity should be independent of the state. Significantly he did not secede: the Church of Ireland might be in captivity to the state, but Darby still saw it as the church.

While convalescing from a riding accident in October 1827, however, he came to a new assurance of faith. This not only gave him a sense of rest regarding his personal salvation, but also left him convinced the Bible is a Christian’s sole authority, which would remain even if the church should cease to exist. Gradually he moved out of the established church and took his place among the Dublin seceders.

But the whole movement might have died away without Theodosia, the wealthy and pious countess of Powerscourt (1800–1836), whose home lay within Darby’s parish. She had a strong interest in scriptural prophecy and opened her home to conferences on the subject.

These brought together many emerging Brethren leaders, along with evangelicals who preferred to remain in existing churches. In time the latter withdrew from the conferences, and those who remained developed a common mind. Their interpretation of Scripture developed into dispensationalism, marked





PROPHETIC TRUTH Oxford university was undergoing revival when Newman introduced Darby's ideas to Christ Church (left).

DEMANDING ARCHBISHOP Below: This bust memorializes William Magee, whose oath of supremacy helped sour Darby on Anglicanism.

by a negative estimate of contemporary society and of the future of organized Christendom. Here at last was a strong common thread and a powerful driver for secession from the established church.

By 1829 Groves had followed his missional calling to Baghdad and taken others with him. Meanwhile new people joined the Brethren in 1830, including Cronin, Parnell, and Francis Newman (1805–1897), younger brother of Anglican priest John Henry Newman. (John Henry would famously convert to Catholicism in 1845 and become a cardinal in 1879.)

Ireland proved largely barren soil for Brethren outreach until a revival almost 30 years later that lasted from 1858 to 1862. Many early leaders came from the Protestant gentry, which alienated Catholics; Darby even received a death threat for “Seducing the people . . . by your Bible business.” Many Evangelicals distanced themselves from the new movement because of its radicalism, potential for divisiveness, and novel views of biblical prophecy.

Evangelicalism shaped the new movement, but followers felt it did not go far enough and sought a more radical obedience to Scripture, free of the weight of denominational traditions, and wanted to recover a living sense of the Holy Spirit at work.

Paradoxically they were both seceders (open to accusations of sectarianism) and ecumenists (seeking a fellowship broad enough to embrace all believers). Sometimes one was emphasized, sometimes the other. Early Brethren were like an unstable chemical compound; as the movement spread to England, that instability would cause a chain reaction.

MOVING TO OXFORD

During the late 1820s, the university city of Oxford had witnessed the rise of a strident Evangelicalism, critical of the established church. Among those affected were

New Testament afresh as the Brethren recommended, he came to reject the divinity of Christ and the reality of the supernatural. In turn the Brethren rejected him.

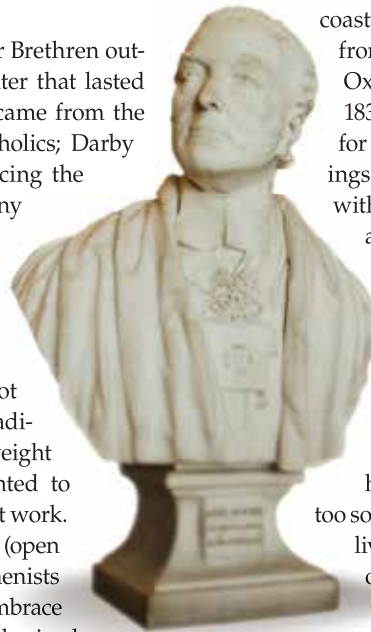
From Oxford the movement traveled further south and west to the county of Devon, which proved fertile soil for the Brethren message. This was Groves's home. His personal example influenced many early Brethren, among them Müller, whose Bible study had led him to views similar to Groves and Henry Craik.

Meanwhile Newton had settled in the coastal town of Plymouth—about 30 miles from Müller and Craik. He invited his old Oxford friend Wigram to the city, and in 1831 Wigram began to hold meetings for prophetic study. As in Dublin, meetings were initially timed to avoid clashing with church services, and local clergy attended. The group began to break bread together, initially on Monday evenings, but later on Sunday mornings.

One colorful early leader, Percy Hall (1801–1884), like most early Brethren, adopted pacifist views; he published a pamphlet explaining why he had resigned as a naval officer. He too sold most of his possessions and began to live simply. Hall may have been the first of the Brethren to preach the idea that Christ would rapture believers before the tribulation of the end times, which

became a hallmark of Brethren teaching.

Close fellowship and radical economic sharing marked the growing gathering: “The homes of the wealthy were plainly furnished, presenting an air of unworldliness and making them more homely for their poorer brethren and sisters.” Such radicalism attracted many; some moved to Plymouth to share in it. One writer in 1834 summed up the group's standpoint as





"Separation from the world, union of the saints, and the liberty of, and dependence on the Holy Ghost, according to the [W]ord."

Leaders of the movement in various parts of England dedicated their full-time work to Christian ministry and planted networks of local assemblies (as they were called), which they served as unpaid pastors. In north Devon a Baptist church at Barnstaple metamorphosed into a Brethren assembly as a result of the ministry of its pastor, Robert C. Chapman (1803–1902). Concern for the poor motivated his commitment to a simple lifestyle, and he chose to live in a humble part of town.

A SOLEMN PAUSE

Sometimes entire existing congregations and groups of congregations aligned with the Brethren. The Quakers, who had split from the established churches around 1650 (see CH #117), were now reeling from turmoil following a controversy over evangelical ideas.

Several hundred Quakers seceded, and some founded Brethren gatherings. Quakers helped to strengthen Brethren commitment to open, unstructured worship—although few assemblies followed Quakers in allowing the public ministry of women. In addition Quakers and Brethren began to intermarry, which further spread Brethren ideas into Quaker families.

Another group in northwest England, the "Barkerites" or "Christian Brethren," began as a Methodist schism, but some congregations developed into Brethren assemblies. In 1843 their short-lived magazine, *The Christian Brethren's Journal and Investigator*, described the most typical early Brethren meeting, the meeting for Bible reading:

Each has his Bible, and . . . they read round, verse by verse. . . . When the portion fixed upon has been

AN APOSTOLIC CHURCH Above: Müller's Bethesda Chapel in Bristol became a center of the movement.

THE OTHER NEWMAN BROTHER Right: Francis Newman brought Brethren ideas to Oxford.

read through, a solemn pause ensues, during which all silently lift their hearts to God for the guidance of his Spirit; and then if anyone has a question to ask respecting the portion of Scripture that has been read, he asks it, and it is considered; and if any one present has light on the subject, it is answered.

Other assemblies had their roots in the ministry of Scottish preacher John Bowes (1805–1874), previously a Methodist. He traveled widely, engaged in public debates, and founded gatherings in Scotland and England, a few of which developed into Brethren assemblies. He illustrates the fluidity of Brethrenism as people and congregations moved in and out of Brethren circles. Magazines and conferences for prophetic study provided some cohesion.

Müller set his roots down in Bristol where he and Craik ministered in Bethesda Chapel. Darby felt they needed "a little more principle of largeness of communion" at Bethesda, and Chapman influenced them to stop requiring that applicants for membership should be baptized as believers.

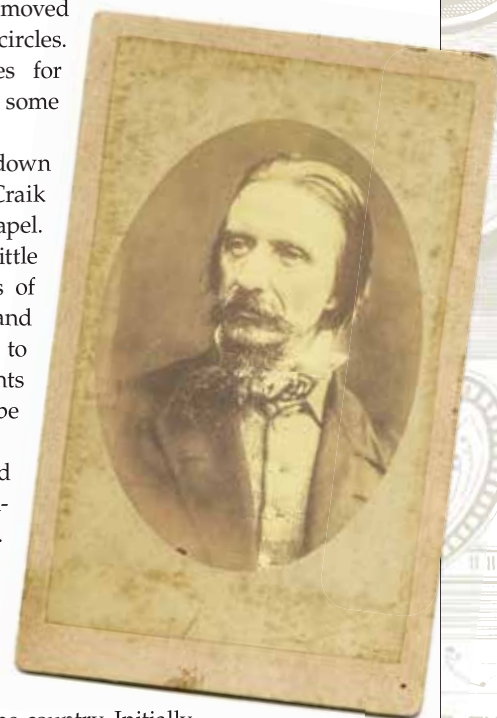
By 1840 Groves estimated the Brethren had 200 assemblies in Britain and Ireland. Brethren also attempted to start work elsewhere. Switzerland had experienced an evangelical awakening, the *Réveil*, from 1815 on, and Darby visited the country. Initially he worked within existing churches, but he formed separate gatherings once Swiss Calvinists condemned his teaching in 1840.

Persia proved hostile to Groves and his colleagues, and in 1835 they moved to India. There, after controversy resulting from Groves's attempt to work with the CMS, a Brethren work developed around the Godavari Delta. In what is now British Guyana, an ex-clergyman, Leonard Strong, adopted Brethren beliefs in 1837 and formed a large assembly, possibly motivated by a desire to minister to slaves working the plantations.

Müller provided some support for work overseas through his Scripture Knowledge Institution, but this was the only agency to do so. Many Brethren opposed forming para-church agencies. Only later would they acquire a reputation for being mission-minded.

WHAT KIND OF UNITY?

The Brethren rejected ordination, but many of the early leaders were former clergy. The movement was





SPREADING THROUGH ENGLAND *Left:* As the third center of the movement, Plymouth gave the Brethren the enduring name many outsiders called them.

NO SETTING BUDGETS *Below:* Brethren rejected denominational mission agencies like the Church Missionary Society, whose training college is shown here.



neither democratic nor led by the working class. Its strong leadership proved to be its undoing. Between 1845 and 1848, a catastrophic division occurred centering on a clash between strong-minded leaders. In 1832 Darby had told a group: "You are nothing, nobody, but Christians"; the moment they ceased to offer fellowship to any consistent Christian, he added, they would either become divided themselves or promote sectarianism. His warning proved prophetic.

Groves also expressed concern over sectarianism. He saw a tendency to make *light* rather than *life* the basis of fellowship—to fellowship with those who agreed doctrinally rather than those who shared the experience of life in Christ. To make things worse, Darby and Newton were diverging in their understanding of prophecy. Newton did not accept Darby's understanding of the rapture. Nor did Müller. Darby also felt marginalized and unwelcome at Plymouth.

But the climax came in 1847 when Darby became aware that Newton taught that some of Christ's sufferings were due not simply to the imputation of human sin, but to his voluntary identification with fallen humanity that required him to clear himself by

obeying the Father's will. Müller said that Newton's Christ needed a Savior.

When Bethesda welcomed into membership two ex-members of Newton's assembly, Darby refused to preach there. He demanded that Bethesda investigate and condemn Newton's errors. Müller and Craik initially refused, then condemned Newton's errors but still did not investigate, and they continued to receive into communion those who had sat under Newton's ministry if they were personally sound in faith.

Darby argued that it was impossible for Bethesda to exclude Newton's errors without excluding his followers. For him a believer who even associated with those who taught error became infected: "For my own part I should neither go to Bethesda in its present state, nor while in that state go where persons from it were knowingly admitted." He believed unity should be universal—but also that doctrinal agreement should be visible.

Newton republished his tracts that autumn, but because he did not retract his errors, Müller brought the matter to the church. Bethesda now determined

not to receive anyone defending Newton's views. Darby approved but urged Bethesda to withdraw earlier statements. Bethesda refused, and the movement split. When in 1849 Darby called on Müller to seek renewed fellowship, the latter refused in protest.

What became known as the Open Brethren asserted that each assembly had the right to conduct its own affairs in the light of responsibility to Christ and to welcome true believers to the Lord's table. Exclusive Brethren followed Darby in asserting that "separation from evil" was the basis for unity. An individual disfellowshipped by one meeting was out of communion with all; any meeting accepting such a person was regarded as infected with spiritual evil.

Assemblies divided; friends were alienated; suspicion replaced hospitality. The movement to bring Christians out of dividing denominations into one fellowship was irreversibly damaged. Division between Open and Exclusive Brethren remains today. ☐

Tim Grass is a senior research fellow at Spurgeon's College and the author or editor of books on the Brethren including Gathering to His Name and a biography of F. F. Bruce.

The “simple standard of God’s word”: Anthony Norris Groves

At a time when many Protestants in Europe and America had barely begun to think about world mission, Anthony Norris Groves (1795–1853) introduced a new idea to his circle of friends from various denominations. It was a simple idea but one that would have far-reaching consequences.

Norris Groves (as he was usually called) started his adult life as a dentist and then trained to be a missionary with the Church of England before adopting a radically different approach.

Ignoring 1,800 years of Christian history with its accumulated institutions and traditions, Groves proposed to do exactly as the earliest Christians did. In the New Testament itself, he sought to discover the mind of the Lord on matters relating to church and mission. In 1825 he introduced this idea in a small booklet called *Christian Devotedness*, and he later declared:

My great desire has been to cast myself on the word of God, that every judgment of my soul concerning all things may be right, by being, in all, the mind of God.

In 1829 Groves gave up his lucrative profession, vacated his large house, and took his wife, Mary, and his three young children to the heart of the Muslim world—Baghdad. There they looked to their Lord alone to guide and to provide.

Determined to live by faith, they sought to follow the instructions they found in Scripture. “My earnest desire,” he said, “is to re-model the whole plan of missionary operations so as to bring them to the simple standard of God’s word.”

AT THE FEET OF JESUS

Christian Devotedness came into the hands of George Müller, and the booklet moved him deeply. He experienced something, he said, that was “like a second conversion.” It was

an entire and full surrender of heart. I gave myself fully to the Lord. Honour, pleasure, money, my physical powers, my mental powers, all was laid down at the feet of Jesus, and I became a great lover of the word of God.

From that point onward, the names of Groves and Müller were inseparably linked. As the Groves family set out for Baghdad in 1829, they left behind a young tutor who had lived with them for two years and greatly admired their faith. His name was Henry



DENTIST TO MISSIONARY The impact of Groves’s desire to live according to the standard of the early church would be profound.

Craik (1805–1866), and he became George Müller’s closest colleague.

A few months later, Müller himself stayed in the house vacated by Groves, and there met Groves’s sister Mary (1797–1870). The following year they were married; Mary Müller’s motherly warmth and affection toward the orphans went far in

providing a happy home for them all.

George and Mary Müller continued to receive news from her brother in Baghdad and later India, along with further booklets developing ideas that reappear in Müller’s *Narrative of the Lord’s Dealings*.

Though Müller later became the Brethren movement’s best-known and most influential leader,

“I do not desire to bring you over to any church, but to the simple truth of God’s Word, and to the others, we wish you to read the New Testament that you may learn to judge of God’s truth, not by what you see in the churches around you, but by the Word of God itself.”

Groves inspired and deeply affected its earliest phases. Groves has also been called “the father of faith missions,” as Müller, Hudson Taylor (1832–1905), Watchman Nee (1903–1972), Bakht Singh (1903–2000), and many others adopted his principles of living by faith.

But his chief legacy lies in his simple resolve to ignore church traditions and do as the earliest Christians did, taking “the early church” as a God-given model to be applied in every culture and every age.

Robert Bernard Dann is the author of Father of Faith Missions: The Life and Times of Anthony Norris Groves (1795–1853), The Primitivist Ecclesiology of Anthony Norris Groves, and The Primitivist Missiology of Anthony Norris Groves.



“Thus far the Lord has helped us”

HOW HUDSON TAYLOR LEARNED TO LIVE BY FAITH

Lisa Nichols Hickman

TWO SCROLLS WITH CHINESE CHARACTERS graced the mantel of Hudson Taylor’s (1832–1905) home. The calligrapher’s playful stroke of bamboo brush dipped into lampblack ink and drops of water on Xuan paper concealed the mastery and artistry behind the seemingly simple words. The Chinese calligraphy depicted two names that reminded Taylor of God’s provision: *Ebenezer* and *Jehovah-Jireh*.

These names come from 1 Samuel 7:12: “Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Jeshanah, and named it Ebenezer; for he said, ‘Thus far the Lord has helped us’” and Genesis 22:14: “So Abraham called that place ‘The Lord will provide’ (Jehovah-Jireh); as it is said to this day, ‘On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided.’”

Ebenezer: a depiction of God’s past provision. *Jehovah-Jireh*: a designation of God’s provision promised for the future. The verses are often cited as among Taylor’s favorites. Together they shape an overarching narrative of God’s salvation story in Scripture and give us insight into Taylor’s conviction to live by faith.

As Taylor’s China Inland Mission (CIM) traversed beyond the coastlands, the reminders of God’s provision

TRUSTING IN HIS PROVIDER Hudson Taylor (*center, with long beard*) sits with other missionaries in 1891.

became lived and breathed realities as he witnessed: “Upon past Ebenezers we built our Jehovah-Jireh.”

THE NAMES OF GOD

It may have been Andrew John Jukes (1815–1901), an English theologian and early influence on Taylor, who introduced him to these aspects of God’s character. Years later Jukes published *The Names of God in Scripture* (1888), where he claimed:

I purpose therefore, if God permit, to call attention to the names under which God has revealed Himself to man in Holy Scripture. The first four we find in the earlier chapters of Genesis. They are, first, “God,” (in Hebrew, *Elohim*); then, “Lord,” (or *Jehovah*); then, “Almighty,” (*El Shaddai*); and then, “Most High,” (*El Elyon*).

For Jukes the varied names and descriptions of God and God’s character were elements in an elaborate mosaic whose pattern revealed the divine provision

and purpose across time and space. Jukes would have a profound impact on Taylor's life too.

Most accounts of Taylor's life feature his June 1849 conversion to the faith at age 17 (which was an answer to his mother's prayers) and his December 1849 call to China, but little is written regarding Taylor's adult baptism by Jukes. He baptized Taylor in either 1852 or 1853 at the Hull Brethren Assembly located in Hull, a port city in East Yorkshire.

Even *Early Years: The Growth of a Soul* (1911), written by Taylor's son F. Howard Taylor and daughter-in-law Mary (Guinness) Taylor, neglects the baptism despite the many dramatic stories it shares from this season of Taylor's life. As a young man, he lived in voluntary poverty, subsisting on brown bread and oatmeal, to serve in Drainside (a poverty-stricken section of Hull), while simultaneously learning the medical arts from Dr. Robert Hardey.

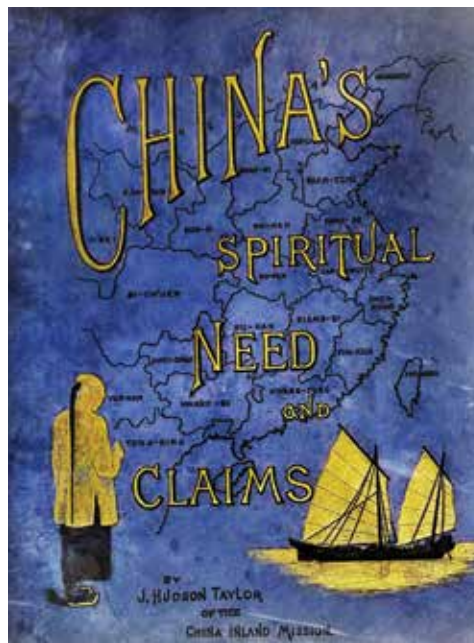
Taylor's baptism among the Brethren actually formed part of a coherent trinity of events in his life: conversion to Christ, call to China, and commission by baptism into his vocation. All three prepared Taylor to leave his permanent mark on the worldwide mission movement, but the Brethren had an unmistakable influence on how he would live through faith.

BREAK BREAD, SERVE, PRAY, SING, GO

The Brethren had emerged as a group of separatists from the Anglican tradition in the 1820s in Dublin; they deemed themselves not a church, but instead, a movement (see "Müller and friends," pp. 24–28). By 1831 the movement had reached Plymouth and grown under the guidance of three leaders: George Wigram, Benjamin Wills Newton, and John Nelson Darby (see "Caught up to meet Jesus in the clouds," pp. 34–36).

They preached and practiced a call to ministry shaped by the Spirit rather than confirmed by ordination or academic study, a simplicity in worship marked by elements of Acts 2 and 4, a drive toward unity across denominations, and an overarching devotion to the apostolic church as the primary foundational example of a church on the move. They eschewed what they deemed the apostasy of staid denominations and errant separatist efforts.

While unity was an aspiration, divisions between Open and Exclusive Brethren divided the Brethren assemblies of Taylor's time. The split had occurred in 1848, just prior to Taylor's baptism: Taylor participated with the Open Brethren. For the Brethren the noun "the church" was a misnomer. Rather they believed that



"COME OVER AND HELP US" Above: Taylor's writings told England of the need for missionaries, and many responded.

THE OLD MISSIONARY

Right: Taylor sat for this photo late in life. He had adopted Chinese dress with the China Inland Mission.



the verbs of the early apostolic witness compelled them to break bread, to serve, to pray, to sing, and, perhaps most important for Taylor, to go.

If Jukes introduced Taylor to God as *Ebenezer* and *Jehovah-Jireh*, George and Mary Müller further exemplified the lesson. In the Müllers Taylor found a living example of dependence on God as provider of past and future needs.

Müller was known famously by now for "living by faith," relying wholly on God for support in each moment of need (see "Even the wind obeyed," pp. 18–20). In his *Narratives* Müller demonstrated over and over the faith principle by which he lived and served:

A brother in the Lord came to me this morning and, after a few minutes of conversation gave me £2,000 for furnishing the new Orphan House. . . . Now I am able to meet all of the expenses. In all probability I will even have several hundred pounds more than I need. The Lord not only gives as much as is absolutely necessary for his work, but he gives abundantly. This blessing filled me with inexplicable delight. He had given me the full answer to my thousands of prayers during the [past] 1,195 days.



THE YOUNG IDEALIST Above: Taylor posed for this picture around 1865 before departing for China.

TIME TO REST Left: CIM missionaries attend a tea party with Taylor in Changsha, China, the day before his death.

Müller's influence on Taylor took root, though living fully by this faith-mission practice would take time to flourish. The two men corresponded, and in later years Müller sent money to China to support the CIM.

Shortly after his baptism, Taylor joined the Chinese Evangelization Society (CES) as its first missionary to China. This society had arisen from the life and witness of German Lutheran missionary Karl Gützlaff (1803–1851), who had previously inspired the famous Dr. David Livingstone (1813–1873) to set out as a medical missionary to Africa.

Let but devoted labourers be found, who will prove faithful to God, and there is no reason to fear that God will not prove faithful to them. He will set before them an open door; and will esteem them of more value than the sparrows and the lilies. . . . He will be with them in danger, in difficulty, in perplexity; and while they may be perfect weakness, He will work in them mightily. They may cast their bread upon the waters, but His word shall not return unto Him void, but shall accomplish that which He pleases, and shall prosper in the thing whereto He sends it. —*Hudson Taylor, 1887*

Taylor's experience with the CES proved trying. In spite of his past history of relying on generosity while living in Drainside and practicing medicine, he now found it difficult to raise support as required. He resigned from the CES in 1857 in frustration (Müller supported this move), but continued to live and work in the Chinese city of Ningbo. While there he married fellow missionary Maria Dyer in 1858. In 1860 he and Maria and their first child, Grace, returned to England for a six-year respite due to Taylor's poor

health. There he finished translating the Bible into the Ningbo dialect of Chinese and completed his medical diploma.

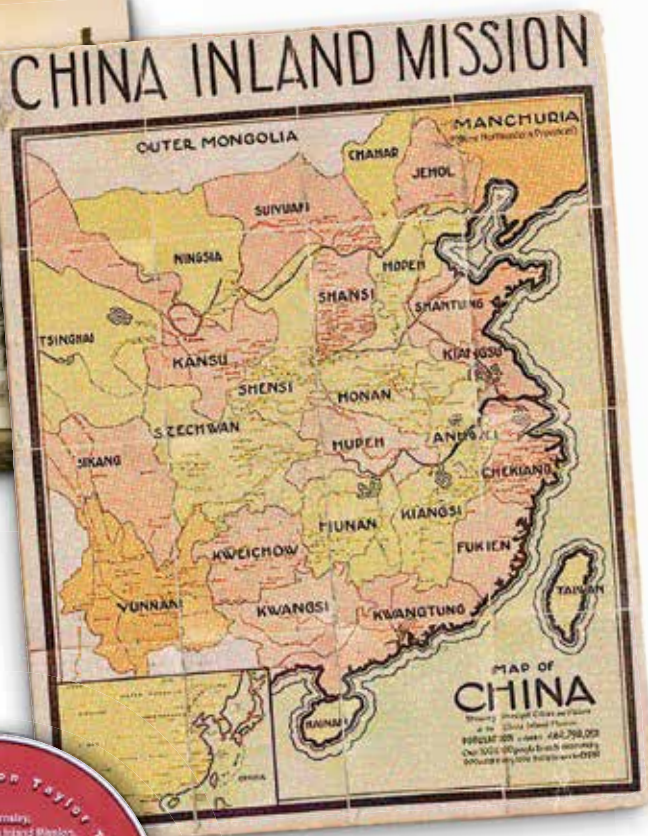
TO LIVE BY FAITH

In preparation for a return to China in 1866, Taylor promised to "live by faith" in the summer of 1865, in the way that Müller had demonstrated to him so many years before. He hoped to reach 11 unreached provinces beyond the coastlands of China toward the interior.

Because of the uncertainty of the scope, traditional mission organizations were unwilling to offer resources in support of his venture. So Taylor went on his own, sailing with his family back to China on May 26, 1866. This marked the beginning of the China Inland Mission. He set forth without a traditional denomination, without financial support, and without the credential of ordination, but guided by the promise of Scripture for those unreached beyond the coastline in China.

Some scholars have suggested Taylor's aim of converting the interior of China was motivated by even more than the noble desire to bring the good news of Christ to those 11 provinces. It also may have reflected Taylor's noncompetitive spirit with other missionaries along the coast. Perhaps this was another expression of the Brethren value of unity.

In fact many aspects of Taylor's faith-mission principles were motivated by the question, does this practice unite or divide? For Taylor nonordained and ordained missionaries carried the same authority; men and women (including single women) were welcomed as missionaries in the field; all denominations were invited as accepted partners; and each missionary was directly responsible to God, rather than an institutional body, as his or her authority.



THE EXCHANGED LIFE

From the moment Taylor and fellow missionary Joseph Edkins set forth up the Huangpu River from Shanghai, they followed its dark water, not unlike the line of a calligrapher's quill, as they traveled to the interior. Through his work in the China Inland Mission, Taylor embodied what he deemed "the exchanged life": Christ lived in and through him, giving him new life and a vital, living faith.

That faith allowed Taylor to withstand the difficulties of the initial language barriers, the challenges of the opium trade, and the occasions when relationships between the missionaries and the local people became tense or even hostile. Even more his depth of faith allowed Taylor to withstand grueling grief over the lost lives of several of his children, and eventually Maria too in 1870. He married missionary Jennie Faulding in 1871, and their first two children died as well.

The path of Taylor's travels and travails continued to develop like those characters on the parchment paper: *Ebenezer* and *Jehovah-Jireh*. When Taylor prayed and petitioned God for a hundred new missionaries, more than that signed on. When the Boxer Rebellion shook the very foundations of local trust in 1900, Taylor and his team of missionaries remained faithful. When Taylor arrived Christians in China could be counted like ink drops on a page; today estimates place the number of Christians in China as high as 100 million.

In *China's Spiritual Need and Claims* (1865), Taylor presented the faith-mission principle in three propositions: missionaries would be driven by apostolic evangelism and not by divisive denominationalism, missionaries would not depend on debt nor would



BUILDING TO LAST This is the London headquarters of the CIM in the 1860s (above left) and the last map the mission made before it left Communist China in 1948 (above).

FAMOUS SON Left: This plaque in Barnsley, England, where Taylor was born, recognizes his historical importance in China.

they solicit funds, and missionaries agreed to serve without guaranteed income.

Without temporal support missionaries relied solely on God's provision and the sustenance of Scripture. Taylor's writing extended that promise of provision. It is in an 1887 edition of *China's Spiritual Need and Claims* that we find his full statement of trust:

Upon past Ebenezers we built our Jehovah-Jireh. They that know Thy name, will put their trust in Thee. The experience of these nineteen years abundantly shows how safe it has been to base our expectations on the promises of the living God. **✠**

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Caught up to meet Jesus in the clouds

JOHN NELSON DARBY'S VIEW OF THE LAST THINGS HAS DRAMATICALLY OUTLIVED HIM

Roger Robins

FROM LEFT BEHIND TO NUMEROLOGY, the picture of the “last things” painted by many Christians today looks different than it did before the middle of the nineteenth century. Up to that point, most American evangelicals imagined that the church was the New Israel, heir to the promises of the Old and New Testaments. It would persevere through tribulation to triumph and enter the blessed millennium of Revelation 20. Only then would Christ return to bring about the consummation of all things. That view, known as postmillennialism, formed a near consensus.

Beginning in the 1830s, a new paradigm, in which Christ would rapture believers before a great tribulation that would precede the millennium, began to displace the old. By the early twentieth century, this view, known as premillennialism, had come to predominate. Its chief architect: John Nelson Darby.

CALLED TO GOD, NOT THE BAR

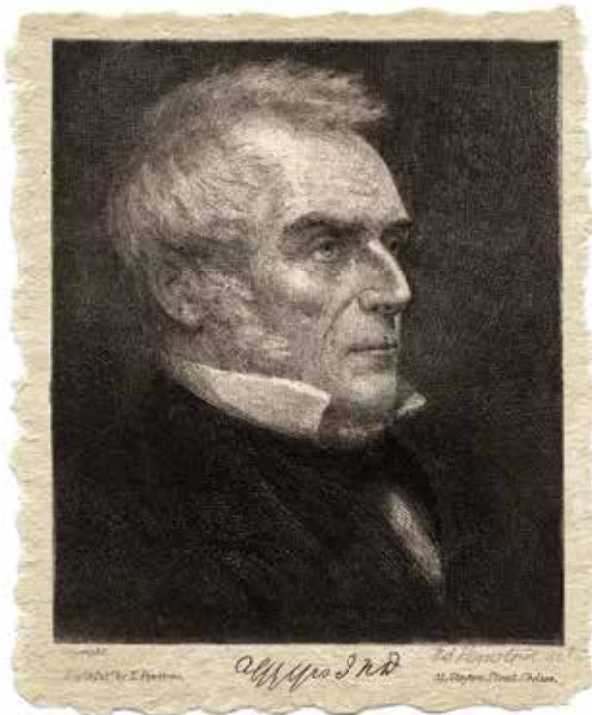
The youngest son of a wealthy Anglo-Irish merchant, Darby was born in London in 1800 into a world of

I WISH WE'D ALL BEEN READY Does this landscape make you think of the film *A Thief in the Night* (1972)? If so, you can thank Darby.

commerce and privilege. All was not ideal—he had a distant father and an absent mother—but he showed resourcefulness and talent, graduating in 1819 from Trinity College, Dublin, as its top-ranked classics student. A promising career in law awaited him, but by then his religious turn was already underway.

This was not entirely surprising—Trinity College was a stronghold of Anglican Evangelicalism. Though called to the bar as a lawyer in 1822, Darby forsook that profession to enter the Anglican ministry. After his 1826 ordination in the Church of Ireland, he took charge of a destitute parish in rural County Wicklow, about 15 miles south of Dublin. His parishioners knew him as a tireless, compassionate, and intensely earnest priest.

He was a priest troubled in spirit, though, as his developing views of true Christianity increasingly clashed with the Anglican establishment. A turning



THE GRAND OLD MAN Darby (at left; his gravestone is below) wrote, preached, traveled, and debated at a prodigious clip, and even if his friends saw themselves as Brethren, outsiders often called them Darbyites.

JESUS, TAKE ME HOME Right: Darby's system flared from the pages of the *Christian Herald* and *Signs of Our Times*, America's leading religious newspaper at the turn of the 20th c.

Darby's system turned on a sharp distinction between Israel and the church. "Rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15) meant recognizing their distinct roles and correctly discerning the dealings of God with each. Israel is an earthly entity, the recipient of temporal promises literally fulfilled on earth. The church is a heavenly entity, the recipient of spiritual promises fulfilled in the heavenlies.

With that principle of interpretation in place, the divine narrative came more clearly into view, though still not as clearly as Darby's readers might have wished: he wrote voluminously and imaginatively but not lucidly. His mature scheme, though, generally identified six "dispensations."

The first began with Adam and extended to the great flood. The second stretched from Noah to Abraham. The Abrahamic dispensation continued until the giving of the law to Moses. The fourth dispensation—the dispensation of Israel—was the most complex and crucial. Not only did it contain three subdispensations (law, priesthood, and kingship), it also featured an innovation that, for Darby, unlocked the secrets of the last days. He felt Israel's rejection of the Messiah had interrupted the fourth dispensation after week 69 of the 70 weeks prophesied in Daniel 9:24. The result was a fifth dispensation, a vast parenthesis within the fourth, unrevealed to Old Testament prophets and governed by God's dealings with the church.

THE INTERRUPTED STORY

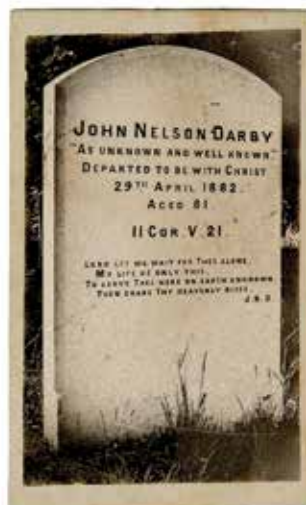
Living Christians, then, found themselves in the Gentile dispensation, the Church Age, but how might they expect it to end? Here Darby introduced another

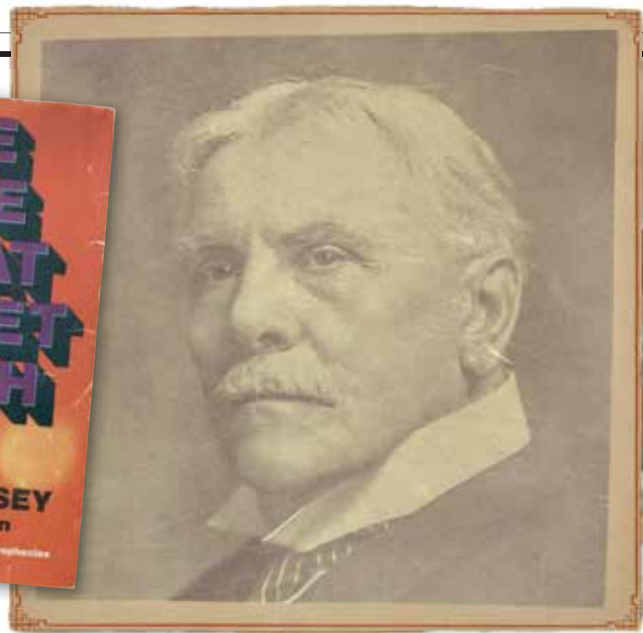
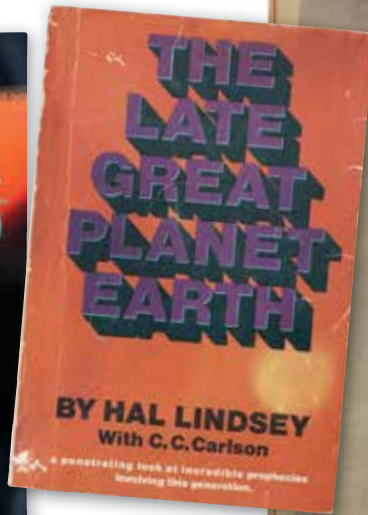
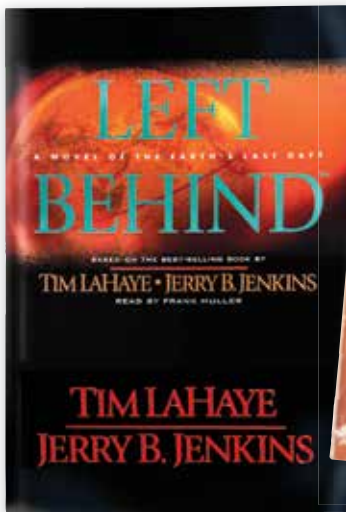


point came in 1827, when a serious injury forced him into extended convalescence. He spent months of recuperation pondering his vexed questions. Soon a set of core convictions emerged. One was radical biblicism—truth found in Scripture alone, interpreted literally in its plain meaning. Another touched on ecclesiology: he saw the church as a spiritual priesthood of believers. And finally Darby found certain assurance of Christ's Second Coming followed by a millennial reign on earth.

Over the next few years, the young minister grew further estranged from Anglicanism. Meanwhile he began to affiliate with likeminded people dismayed by Christian division and unbiblical traditions. They longed for the purity, simplicity, and unity they saw in the New Testament and called themselves "Brethren"—and, like Darby, they were making their way out of the established church.

By turns personable and persuasive, disheveled and difficult, Darby was a force of nature; he soon dominated the young movement through will and strength of intellect. One could find his imprint virtually everywhere, but especially in the Brethren's understanding of the end of time. Europe in the early nineteenth century—wracked by political, economic, and social revolution—formed a cauldron of prophetic speculation. Darby interacted with millenarian views of Edward Irving (1792–1834), a Presbyterian who ended up founding his own movement, as well as Jesuits and Jansenists (the last was a Catholic movement emphasizing human depravity and divine sovereignty).





distinctive feature: 1 Thessalonians 4:17, where the saints are caught up to meet the Lord in the air, pointed to a future rapture that would remove the church and end the Gentile dispensation. Christ would return and take Christians to their reward, resuming the interrupted dispensation of Israel before a period of intense “tribulation”—Daniel’s 70th week.

And what a week: the great tribulation, the rise of the Antichrist, Armageddon, and the triumphant return of Christ in the long-awaited Second Coming. Afterward, with Satan bound and the Antichrist defeated, the millennium—Darby’s sixth dispensation—would begin, the final stage in God’s dealings with his earthly people, Israel. Raptured Christians, meanwhile, would enjoy eternal bliss in heaven. Finally, at the end of the millennium, all believers would be united in the new heaven and the new earth of Revelation 21.

For those who followed this logic and verified the scriptural coordinates on which it rested, this argument held great coherence, explanatory power, and persuasive force—and it placed Darby’s readers into a gripping narrative with the whole of history in its view.

ONLY A SPIRITUAL CHURCH

Darby grounded his beliefs about the church in his beliefs about the end times. Like other primitivists he sought to follow the apostolic church. Yet he also adamantly opposed any attempt to restore apostolic glory. Every dispensation was destined to end in failure; the present was no exception. The visible church lay in ruins, an apostate Christendom. The true church, spiritual and invisible, without creed or clergy, persisted only as a faithful remnant. God’s plan for the church now was rapture, not restoration.

Darby remained an influential figure, but controversy dogged his later decades. In the 1840s a series of disputes escalated into a full-scale schism that split the movement, with Darby at the head of the smaller

ARE WE IN THE LAST DAYS? Scofield (*above*) helped to popularize Darby’s ideas, known to us today mainly through the works of LaHaye, Jenkins, and Lindsey (*left*).

Exclusive Brethren wing. He grew estranged from many of the movement’s cofounders and came under attack from junior associates and younger Open Brethren, who held him responsible for dividing the movement. Yet he persevered, itinerating into his eighties. His health failed him in 1881, first through a fall and then a stroke. He rapidly declined and breathed his last on April 29, 1882.

Though indefatigable and overpowering, Darby was ill-equipped to popularize his own system. Spreading dispensational premillennialism to the masses depended on more pragmatic spirits. By the late 1870s, it had begun to prevail in prophecy conferences and camp meetings across North America, with dynamic champions like Dwight L. Moody (1837–1899), A. J. Gordon (1836–1895), and A. B. Simpson (1843–1919).

It swept the holiness movement and was carried forward into Pentecostalism. In the mid-twentieth century, it was broadcast by radio evangelists like Charles Fuller (1887–1968) and propagated by fundamentalist institutions. Along the way it was adapted, systematized, and refined into a seven-dispensation system by scholars like Cyrus Scofield (1843–1921)—whose Scofield Bible was its greatest single aid—and Charles C. Ryrie (1925–2016), who also produced a popular study Bible.

We are approaching 200 years since Darby first began to formulate his ideas, but his influence has not abated. Whenever American evangelicals today ponder the state of the *Late, Great Planet Earth*, or shudder in fear of being *Left Behind*, they reveal the extent to which they are living in the world Darby fashioned. **[E]**

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For the love of God's Word

A LEGACY OF BRETHREN INFLUENCE

Jennifer Boardman

AMY CARMICHAEL (1867–1951)

Amy Carmichael was born to a well-off Irish Presbyterian family. As a young woman, she felt called to missionary work after hearing Hudson Taylor speak at the Keswick Convention (an annual conference influenced in part by leaders of the Brethren). After brief stints in Japan and Sri Lanka, she was accepted into the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society. Carmichael set foot in India in 1895 and stayed there the remainder of her life.

From the difficult Tamil language to the caste system, Carmichael found service in India frustrating. But she persisted in her efforts to convert Indians to the Christian faith as she traveled to pray with and read the Bible aloud to village women. She was so dedicated that she rejected a suggestion to let women knit with pink wool while discussing the Bible. Her biographer, Elisabeth Elliot, noted, "To try to help God with pink fancywork was, she felt, plain unbelief."

In 1901 Amy Carmichael's life of ministry changed forever. A local Christian woman met a seven-year-old runaway named Preena and brought her to Carmichael. Preena was a temple prostitute, and Carmichael was

MISSIONARY MOTHER Amy Carmichael (pictured *above* outside, in a studio photograph, and at a beach in Madras) became beloved by orphans just as Müller had been.

moved to action when she heard her devastating story and those of countless other abused children. She created the Dohnavur Fellowship, a home where young orphans could escape the evils of temple prostitution. The children she rescued called her "Amma" (Mother).

Influenced by George Müller's model of orphan care, Carmichael made Bible reading an educational focus—and, like Müller, didn't ask for money, instead relying on prayer to bring practical relief. India outlawed temple prostitution in the 1940s, but today, Dohnavur continues as a thriving and safe home under the supervision of the Church of South India. It ministers to Indian children in need through an orphan home, hospital, farm, dairy, and two schools.

Carmichael taught the orphans that true faith is about belief in Jesus and not adherence to a particular denomination. When someone asked a Dohnavur boy if he was Anglican, Wesleyan, or Baptist, he responded, "I am Christian."



IMPRISONED AUTHOR *Far left:* Watchman Nee did it all: writing, preaching, and holding training meetings.

PROLIFIC PREACHER *Near left:* Harry Ironside reminded readers, "It is well to remember that reading books about the Bible is a very different thing to searching the Word for oneself."

After taking a terrible fall in 1931, Carmichael was mostly bedridden for the remainder of her life. She had already written several books—such as *Things as They Are* (1903), a description of Indian mission work—but now she turned to a full-time writing ministry until her death in India at the age of 83. She would ask herself five simple questions when writing each of her 35 books: "Is it true? Is it helpful? Is it kind? Is it necessary? Does it have the 'seed of Eternity' in it?" Clear, singular questions for a woman who adhered to a clear, singular faith.

HARRY IRONSIDE (1876–1951)

Born in 1876 to devout Brethren parents, Harry Ironside was a young evangelist, even starting his own Sunday school ministry in 1886 at age 11. In 1889 revival preaching convinced Ironside that he was not born again, and he suspended his ministry for six months until he came to a point of accepting Christ in early 1890.

Ironside's father had died when he was two, but he followed in the footsteps of his father when he started his own preaching ministry: first through the Salvation Army, then in association with evangelist George McPherson, and then through the Moody Bible Institute. He died while on a preaching tour of Brethren assemblies in New Zealand.

Ironside was known as a true Bible man. He wrote more than 60 books discussing the whole New Testament and all the Old Testament prophetic books, and his commentaries are still used. He was also instrumental in spreading dispensationalism (see pp. 34–36).

Not only did Ironside lack seminary or denominational education, he had only completed the eighth grade. He was simply a passionate student of the Scriptures and a man with an extraordinary gift for preaching the Word of God.

As head of Moody Church, Ironside held the office of pastor. To Brethren such a position wasn't necessary due to the priesthood of all believers. Nevertheless he remained in fellowship with the group. When the 53-year-old struggled over accepting a pastoral call, he reported hearing Christ tell him to feed his lambs (John 21:15), despite his worry about his Brethren colleagues: "So I prayed again, and finally the Lord said to me, 'Feed My sheep. I'll take care of the Brethren!'"

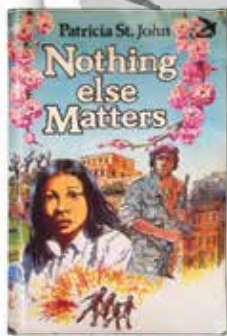
WATCHMAN NEE (1903–1972)

Born to Chinese Christian parents, Watchman Nee became a believer in Jesus at the age of 17. He soon felt called to Christian work and was mentored by British missionary Margaret Barber (1866–1930). Upon her death in 1930, Nee received her entire book collection, which included countless titles by well-known Brethren, including Darby and William Kelly (1821–1906).

Many of Nee's theological ideas stemmed from the influence of these writers, including a commitment to Communion as the center of worship and the rejection of any difference between clergy and lay Christians.

He ran into conflict with the Exclusive Brethren, however, when he refused to isolate himself from other Christians, notably during the Lord's Supper. After taking Communion with his mentor Theodore Austin-Sparks and other non-Brethren in the United Kingdom in 1933, Nee received a letter excommunicating him.

Nee once explained that after his first conversion to knowing Christ, in 1938 he experienced a second conversion: "to know His Body. To know Christ is only half of what the believers need. The believers also must know the Body of Christ. Christ is the head, and He is also the Body." In the Brethren tradition, believers desired to meet together in the name of Jesus: no fussy order of



service, just the Body together. Nee knew that he and other Christians needed more than Christ; they needed each other.

From 1956 to his death in 1972, Nee was imprisoned under the Chinese Communist regime. His grandniece recalled that after his death, the prison guards found a piece of paper under Nee's pillow: "Christ is the Son of God who died for the redemption of sinners and resurrected after three days. This is the greatest truth in the universe. I die because of my belief in Christ. Watchman Nee."

F. F. BRUCE (1910–1990)

Frederick Fyvie Bruce—the son of a Plymouth Brethren preacher—was a Scottish biblical scholar. Although he espoused close ties with the Open Brethren throughout his life, he held some views that differed from theirs, including never adhering to a particular dispensationalist theology and encouraging women to take a place in public ministry.

However in his first and most famous book, *New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* (1943), Bruce clearly supported the Brethren's most solidly held commitment: the reliability of the Scriptures and their total impact on all of life. In 2006 *Christianity Today* called this one of the 50 books that had most shaped evangelicalism.

In his 1946 article, "What Do We Mean by Biblical Inspiration?," Bruce quoted Scottish minister Robertson Smith to describe his commitment to *sola scriptura*:

If I am asked why I receive Scripture as the Word of God and as the only perfect rule of faith and life, I answer with all the fathers of the Protestant Church, "Because the Bible is the only record of the redeeming love of God, because in the Bible alone I find God drawing near to man in Christ Jesus, and declaring to us, in Him, His will for our salvation."



BIBLE DEFENDER Above: F. F. Bruce is best known today for the book that launched his career (right).

BELOVED WRITER Left: Patricia St. John served as a nurse and missionary, but her chief fame today is as a children's book author.



Bruce authored over 40 books, both academic and popular, including a number of New Testament commentaries. His teaching career spanned three decades at the University of Edinburgh, the University of Leeds, the University of Sheffield, and the University of Manchester.

For Bruce the Bible was the only place a Christian could view the whole picture of redemption—from the multiplication of Abraham's descendants to the disobedience of the roving Israelites to the promises incarnated in Jesus Christ. Bruce dedicated his life's work to proving the Bible's historical reliability so that it could provide spiritual transformation in a sinner's heart.

HAROLD ST. JOHN (1876–1957)

PATRICIA ST. JOHN (1919–1993)

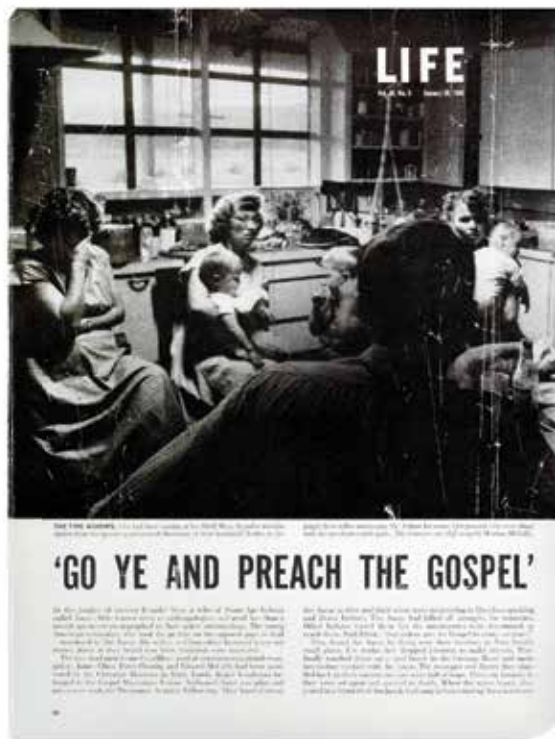
Patricia St. John was born to Brethren parents, Harold and Ella, shortly after they returned to England from serving as missionaries in Brazil. F. F. Bruce called Harold St. John "The Maestro" because of his biblical knowledge, and evangelist Eric Hutchings wrote of him:

He above all others . . . inspired me to get down to a detailed study of the Bible, to seek the plain and obvious meanings of the words. . . . By this sane, prayerful approach, the true typical teaching of Scripture emerged.



YOUNG ENTHUSIASTS Left: Jim Elliot and his friends (pictured above with the Piper Cub plane they used on their trip) died in their twenties, but left a profound legacy.

SACRIFICIAL FAITH Right: A *LIFE* magazine story brought the missionary expedition to national attention.



Like her parents Patricia felt called to missionary work, and like her father she was a dedicated student of the Bible. She served as a nurse alongside her physician brother in Morocco both during and after World War II. In total she spent 27 years as a medical missionary there, five of them in a walled Muslim village in the mountains. She used only her Bible to share her faith through Bible studies and prayer meetings—there were no clergymen or church services to rely on. In fact she was the only Westerner and Christian in the whole village.

In addition to her medical and mission work, Patricia wrote over 25 books, including biographies, poetry, and Christian stories for children. The most famous, *Treasures of the Snow* (1950), is still in print and has been turned into a film, a stage play, and even a Japanese anime series! Another well-known book, *Twice Freed* (1987), imagines the story of Onesimus from the biblical book of Philemon. In her autobiography Patricia left us an indelible testimony to her trust in Jesus's grace in her poem "The Alchemist":

He seeks no second site on which to build,
But on the old foundation, stone by stone,
Cementing sad experience with grace,
Fashions a stronger temple of His own.

JIM ELLIOT (1927–1956)

ELISABETH HOWARD ELLIOT (1926–2015)

Young missionary Jim Elliot and four Christian friends felt called to evangelize the Huaorani people in the jungles of Ecuador. After a handful of friendly encounters, the Huaorani killed the missionaries in January 1956.

Jim's wife, Elisabeth, went on to share Christ with the Huaorani and write two books about Jim's life and death. Elisabeth would live almost six decades more, during which she wrote many additional books and became a well-known speaker, professor, and radio host.

Jim was raised among Brethren in Oregon. After he and Elisabeth met at Wheaton College and married, she too joined the Brethren. (In 1970 she would be confirmed as an Episcopalian along with her second husband, Addison Leitch.) Jim's father was a traveling preacher, holding the Brethren belief that being a pastor is a gift, not an office; Jim was raised to believe he, too, could be a minister of the gospel, even in the jungles of Ecuador.

In Jim Elliot's "Resurrection Sermon" given in 1951, five years before his death, he addressed the power of Scripture:

The Scriptures in themselves are sufficient argument, are sufficient proof of the fact of the truth of Christianity. Because if we take the words of the Apostles . . . they used the Scriptures written a thousand years before their time for the truth of what was happening before the eyes of their generation. So ought we.

For the Elliots, an individual's Christian experience was important but not enduring. The story the Scriptures tell is lasting—even beyond the mortal life of a sacrificial believer. ☞

Jennifer Boardman is a freelance writer and editor. She holds a master of theological studies from Bethel Seminary with a concentration in Christian history.

A Christian organization with integrity

Today the work that Müller began is carried on in a different form. CH managing editor Jennifer Woodruff Tait had the opportunity to visit in Bristol with Phil Thomas, training coordinator and lecturer in theology at Müllers, the charity that continues George Müller's work.

JWT: Where we are sitting now is not part of the original complex, right?

PT: Right. This house was bought in the late 1940s as the administrative offices of Müllers after Ashley Down closed. After World War II, when Britain established the welfare state, a lot of charitable work that had been done by philanthropic Victorian gentlemen—like Müller—was taken over by the state. There were fewer orphans during the war, and the military quarantined the Ashley Down houses. The orphan work was moved into “scattered homes” in Bristol, where a married couple would oversee a house of 10 to 15 youngsters. This continued into the 1970s.

When those closed, as an organization we wanted to continue to benefit the most vulnerable, so we established day-care and family centers in and around Bristol—nursing groups, parenting courses, support groups for single mums—until the mid-1990s. At that point the decision was made to move into partnering with local churches rather than being a para-church organization providing those services ourselves.

We also ran elderly care homes for former orphans until the 1990s, but we realized that we could not give the time and effort necessary to meet Care Quality Commission requirements, so we let professionals take those over.

JWT: What does Müllers do today?

PT: First, we resource local churches and encourage them to reach out and serve their local schools using national initiatives such as Prayer Spaces in Schools and Open the Book. Secondly, we resource believers to be strong in the faith. I run one-day-a-week theology courses to help those for whom Bible college is one step too far. We also use social media and technology to spread the Müllers story. *[I was given two lovely short books—George Müller and His 10,000 Children for kids and The Bristol Miracle for adults—which tell the story of Müller's life and work.—JWT]*

The Scripture Knowledge Institution part of the work is still going strong, and we have around 230 partners in this country and worldwide. We try to maintain a connection, not just give money. If it's just a financial

“HE BECAME POOR” This sampler embroidered by a female orphan is displayed today in the museum at Müllers.



partnership, what's Christian about that? We have a monthly prayer digest we send around, so someone in Zambia can be praying for someone in Chile who is praying for someone in Mongolia. We have a daily prayer meeting in this room at 9:30 when we pray for partners and for confidential needs.

Müllers has a pretty good name in the city. We represent something prayerful and independent of denominational ties. I think people would call us a Christian organization with integrity.

JWT: Tell me more about Prayer Spaces in Schools. That would be difficult to do in the United States.

PT: The UK has a national curriculum which includes religious instruction requirements about different religions. Prayer Spaces in Schools offers easy-to-use material that conforms to the national curriculum requirements for learning about Christianity. The average teacher is a non-Christian and ends up just singing “We plow the fields and scatter” [a famous Anglican hymn], so it's great to offer something more than that. In addition Müllers has a team who will go in and talk about George Müller, his life of faith, and his belief in the power of prayer. Because Anglicanism is the established religion, even though we're not Anglican, people have a vague idea that they know what Christians are like.

JWT: Are there former Müller orphans living today?

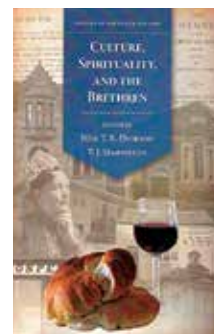
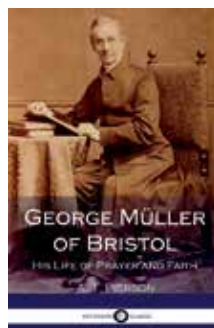
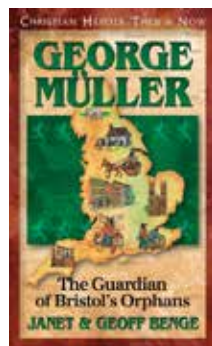
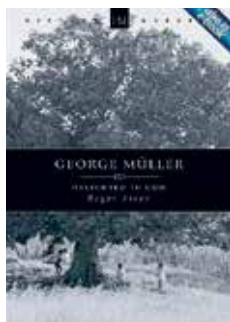
PT: We call them Old Boys and Old Girls and there are around 20 who still gather for reunions, from those who lived in the “scattered homes.” They've organized the reunions themselves, but for the past 20 years or so we've maintained a connection with the group. Those who come have fond memories of their time at Müllers.

JWT: What is at Wilson Street and Ashley Down today?

PT: The Wilson Street homes were damaged during World War II and have been almost entirely demolished and rebuilt. There are plans to put a plaque on the building that stands there now. The Ashley Down homes were sold to local authorities in the late 1940s. In the 1990s homes 1–3 were developed into private flats, and homes 4 and 5 were sold to Bristol City College.

Recommended resources

HERE ARE SOME RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CH EDITORIAL STAFF AND THIS ISSUE'S AUTHORS TO HELP YOU BETTER UNDERSTAND MÜLLER AND THE BRETHREN.



BOOKS

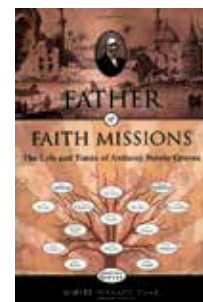
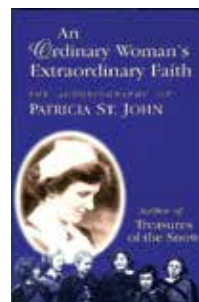
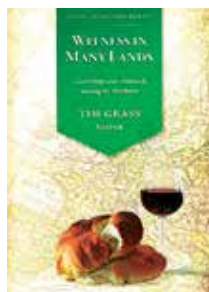
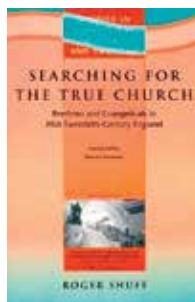
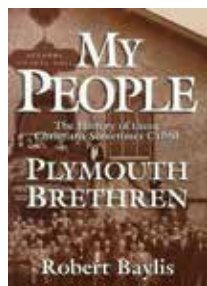
The most comprehensive biography of **George Müller** is *Delighted in God* by Roger Steer (1975). Müller's own works (see below) are also a great source of information on his life, given his meticulous documentation of his activities. Other modern books on Müller include Nancy Garton, *George Müller and His Orphans* (1963); Bonnie Harvey, *George Müller: Man of Faith* (1998); and, for children, Janet and Geoff Bengé, *George Müller* (1999). A number of biographies of Müller were written shortly after his death; the most famous is probably Arthur Tappan Pierson, *George Müller of Bristol* (1899).

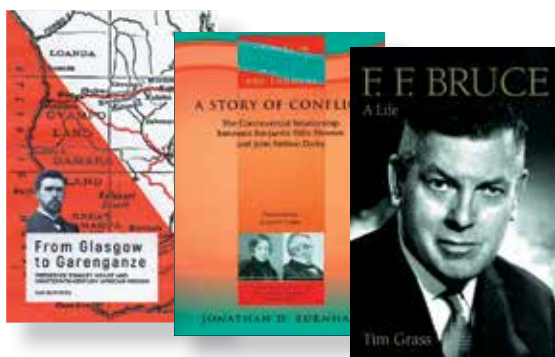
Studies of the **Brethren** (including both the Open and Exclusive branches) include Harold Rowdon, *The Origins of the Brethren 1825–1850* (1967); F. Roy Coad, *A History of the Brethren Movement* (1976); James Callahan, *Primitivist Piety* (1996); Robert Baylis, *My People* (1997); Neil Dickson, *Brethren in Scotland 1838–2000* (2004); Roger Shuff, *Searching for the True Church* (2005); Tim Grass, *Gathering to His Name* (2006) and *Witness in Many Lands* (2013); Neil Dickson and Tim Grass, eds.,

The Growth of the Brethren Movement (2006); and Neil Dickson and T. J. Marinello, eds., *Culture, Spirituality, and the Brethren* (2014) and *Brethren and Mission* (2016).

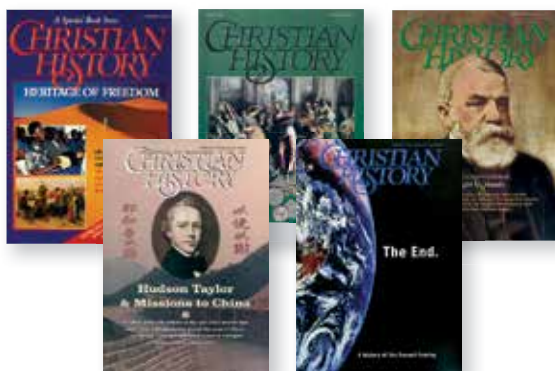
Stories of famous **leaders, authors, and missionaries** associated with the Brethren movement include classics by Mary Guinness Taylor (Hudson Taylor's daughter-in-law) *The Story of the Chinese Inland Mission* (1893), *Hudson Taylor in Early Years* (1911), and *Hudson Taylor and the China Inland Mission* (1918).

Also check out more modern works: Elisabeth Elliot, *Through Gates of Splendor* (1957) and *Shadow of the Almighty* (2009) about Jim Elliot and *A Chance to Die* (2005), about Amy Carmichael; E. Schuyler English, *H. A. Ironside* (1976); Roger Steer, *J. Hudson Taylor* (1990); Patricia St. John's autobiography, *An Ordinary Woman's Extraordinary Faith* (1996) and biography of her father, *Harold St. John* (2011); Bob Laurent, *Watchman Nee* (1998); Max Weremchuk, *John Nelson Darby* (1993); Robert Bernard Dann, *Father of Faith Missions* (2004, on Groves); Jonathan Burnham, *A Story of Conflict* (2007, on Newton





and Darby); Tim Grass, *F. F. Bruce: A Life* (2011); and Ian Burness, *From Glasgow to Garenganze* (2018).



CHRISTIAN HISTORY ISSUES

Read these past issues of *Christian History* online. Some are still available for purchase:

- 9: *Heritage of Freedom*
- 14: *Money in Christian History*
- 25: *Dwight L. Moody*
- 52: *Hudson Taylor*
- 91: *The End*



VIDEOS FROM CHRISTIAN HISTORY INSTITUTE

Videos on this issue's topic include *Robber of the Cruel Streets: The Story of George Müller*; *Steve Saint: The Jungle Missionary*; *Amy Carmichael, Mother to the Motherless*; and *Anthony Norris Groves: The Quiet Trailblazer*.

CHI's Torchlighters series includes episodes on *Jim Elliot* and *Amy Carmichael*, with *George Müller* due out in 2019.

WEBSITES



Müller's *Narratives* and the books adapted from them—*The Life of Trust* and *Answers to Prayer*—are available online at Gutenberg.org.


Mullers.org is the online site of the organization that continues to carry out Müller's ministry; it also has a number of historical resources and photographs. GeorgeMuller.org is a Müller fan site mainly focusing on devotionals, quotations, and videos.



An excellent online introduction to the Brethren is found through the Brethren Historians and Archivists Network at BrethrenHistory.org. You will find a bibliography here and also links to read articles from the *Brethren Historical Review* and to purchase other resources.



Some Brethren resources are also online at the Online Library of Brethren Writers, at Brethren Archive, and at the website of the Christian Brethren Archive in Manchester, which is a great place to visit for research. ☒



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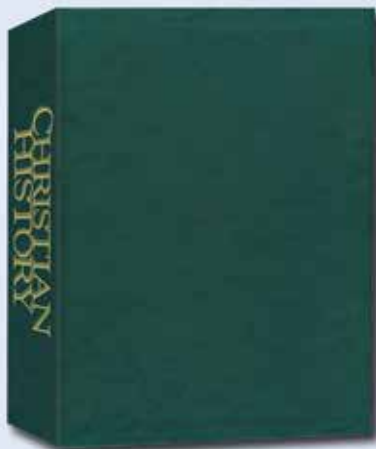
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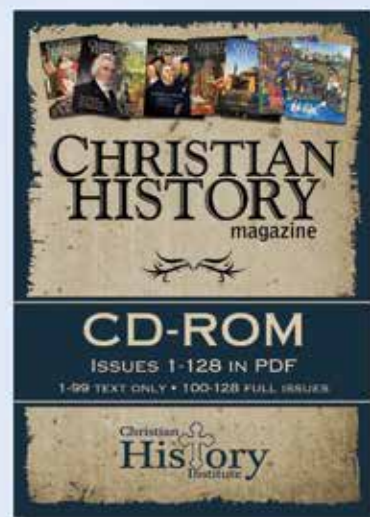
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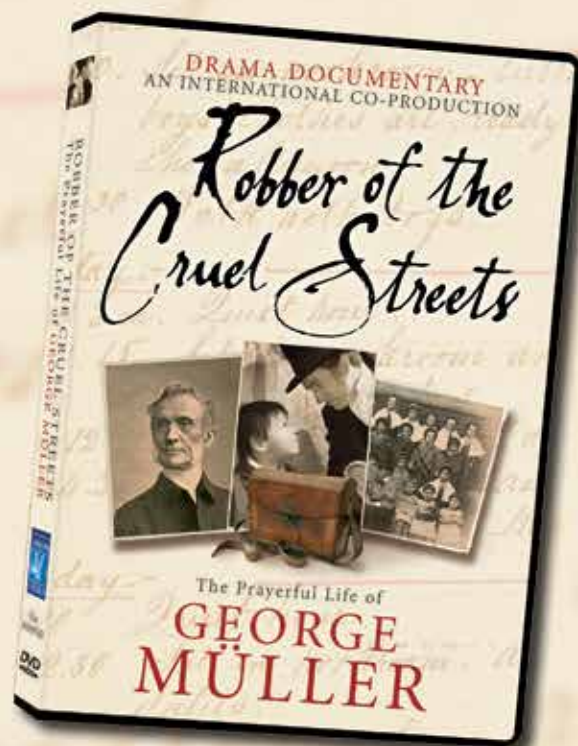
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THE PRAYERFUL LIFE OF GEORGE MÜLLER

Robber of the Cruel Streets

George Müller (1805–1898) was a German playboy who found Christ and gave his life to serve Christ unreservedly. His mission was to rescue orphans from the wretched street life that enslaved so many children in England during the time of Charles Dickens and *Oliver Twist*. Müller rescued, cared for, fed, and educated such children by the thousands. The costs were enormous for such a great work. Yet, amazingly, he never asked anyone for money. Instead he prayed, and his children never missed a meal.

This docudrama presents his life story and shows how God answered prayer and met the needs of his mission. The story raises foundational questions regarding faith and finances. The DVD also includes two special documentaries on Müller and some of the lives affected by his work. Widescreen, 59 minutes.



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