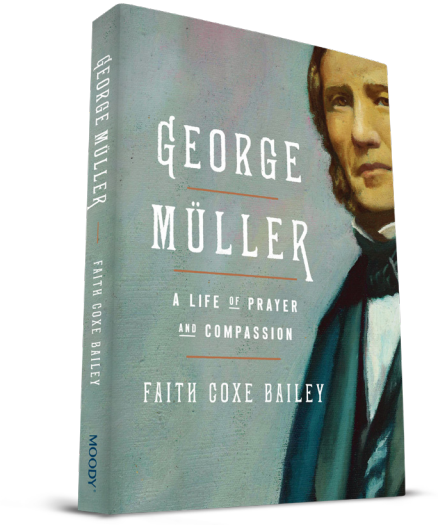

It began with George Müller—rebellious, absorbed in the world and its pleasures.

It became George Müller—miraculously transformed by the power of Christ, daring to dream a dream and to trust God to bring it to pass.

Discover the incredible true story of the man of faith who still inspires us today.

Interested in the whole book? Select your preferred book seller:

MOODY PUBLISHERS

AMAZON

BARNES & NOBLE

GOOGLE PLAY

CHRISTIANBOOK.COM

WALMART

TARGET

Contents

1

Trouble at Home and School

When George Müller heard the carriage door slam, he knew his father was very angry. George stopped, halfway down the broad stairs, waiting for the oak door to fling open. For two days now, he had been waiting for his father's carriage to race up, spitting the gravel on the Heimersleben Road—waiting more fretfully than fearfully, feeling like a prisoner in his own home.

The door swung back, and his father stamped in. "So, you young jailbird," his father roared up at him. "You don't even have the decency to hide."

George stared straight down into his father's face. "You might have paid my fine a jot faster," he said.

Now his father was at the bottom of the steps, his hand gripping the newel post. "And miss the chance to teach you a lesson in honesty and respect! *Nein!* Well, what did a month behind bars teach my son?"

George's lips tightened; the corners of his mouth quirked downward. He shrugged. "That the meals in German jails are terrible."

The newel post shuddered in Herr Müller's hand. "But they're better in the village inns, *ja?* What did I raise—a common thief? Run up a bill and then sneak off without paying a penny!"

"Somebody didn't give you the facts, Father. One innkeeper took all my best clothes to pay for my room."

"So you try to escape out the window from the next one, eh? What were you thinking of?"

"Just a good time. That's all."

"Maybe the police taught you about a good time. Also some respect for authority."

"Police! Ha!"

"You're a no-good at sixteen. If your mother were here—" Herr Müller broke off. "*Ach*, she's been saved two years of misery. And where were you the night she died? Carousing around the street—drunk!"

Herr Müller's arm flailed out, and he grabbed for a cane, hanging on a wall rack. Then he thundered up the stairs, two at a time. "Maybe this'll teach you respect for authority."

George stood stolidly on the stairs, not flinching, but within him a terrible rebellion boiled. Did one man have the right to cane another man? Servant and owner? Father and son? Why was there always someone to say, "Do this"? Father, teacher, innkeeper, police. Would it always be this way? Did it have

to be? Then his father jerked him sideways, and he bounced against the wall.

"Show me something to respect!" George shouted. "You're nothing but a second-rate tax collector, grateful for the crumbs off the province table! I should respect you?"

The cane pointed straight up at the beamed ceiling. "I'll teach you!"

Watching it, George thought, *Someday I'll be free. Free of my father, free of every man, free—* The cane cut through the air with a whistle and sudden sharp pain. Again, and again, and again.

Back at school in Nordhausen, the caning and the springtime skirmish with the police were only unpleasant memories. And not entirely unpleasant. They made good telling over a mug of beer.

The next two years and a half slid by, with Latin, Hebrew, Greek, the classics, and a good deal of beer at the Nordhausen village tavern. When George was nineteen, he was accepted at the University of Halle. Walking up from the Halle railway station, clattering along over the cobblestones, sniffing the violets and the old books that sold side by side along the main street, he realized he was now officially a student of divinity, properly accepted by the Lutheran Church of Germany. It was his father's wish.

Even so, he felt freer than he ever had. Setting his knapsack on the pavement, he stopped to admire the sturdy old stone wall that cut the city in two, a leftover from medieval fortifications, he guessed. Well, the old wall wouldn't box him in. Divinity student or not, he would do exactly as he pleased.

One night, late that fall, the barmaid served the fourth round of beer to the students at the long table. Right across the road from the university, Der Grüner Tisch did a bustling business with students. The air under the rafters was choked with biting tobacco smoke, and three young men pounded on the long green table in wavering rhythm. Suddenly the door opened.

Somebody shouted, "Here's George Müller. Now the fun starts. Only divinity student who pawns his watch to pay his card debts more often than he reads his Bible." Everybody laughed, and the table-pounders threatened to splinter the wood. George scraped a chair across the stone floor, squeezing into the crowd at the table.

"Herr Müller who says he's studying to be a Lutheran minister. Don't listen to him. He's really a jailbird!"

"All right, Emil. They all know me. Where's my beer?" George squinted happily through the smoke along the table. Here were his university friends, his drinking companions since the fall. But at the end sat a stranger—a stranger who looked familiar.

"Emil, do I know everybody here tonight?"

"*Ach*, stupid me! Here is Beta. Down here. He's new. Beta, this is George Müller, who just last week drank five quarts of beer at once and—"

Beta ducked his head to peer along the table. His voice had a hurried, eager sound. "I know George Müller."

George stared back at the fellow, hearing him say, "Don't you remember? We went to school together."

Swiftly, George flipped past classrooms in his mind. Halberstadt? Nordhausen? Why did the fellow sound so eager?

Then an unpleasant picture of a hymnbook and a Bible snapped into place. Now he remembered Beta! A goody-goody if there ever was one. Wouldn't cheat on an exam. Went to church every Sunday. Didn't object to naming off your sins right to your face. Didn't drink! Yet there he was at Der Grüner Tisch with a mug of beer in front of him. George's lips tightened, and he looked the other way.

"Beta, of course, I remember now. Ah, there's my beer. Say, did I interrupt a story when I came in? Let's have the rest of it."

Actually, it was George who told the next story.

"... so I just slung things around in my room and made it look like a real robbery. Everybody felt so sorry. Every one of them stopped in to say I didn't have to pay back a penny of my card debts. Besides, they took up a collection for me. So I doubled my money."

When Der Grüner Tisch closed long after midnight, George helped head the three table-pounders toward their lodgings, shouted good night to Emil and the rest, and started down the road alone. But to his surprise, Beta trotted right beside him.

All evening, the sight of the fellow had made George uneasy. He was sure he knew why. Now Beta said, "George, I want to be friends."

"I know." For a minute they clattered along the cobblestones in silence. Then George added, "So—do I." It was something that he

hadn't admitted to himself until that minute. Now he knew that he didn't want to take the words back.

Beta grinned. "I'm surprised to hear it. When you knew me before—well, I guess I was a pill." What was Beta saying? "But everything's different now."

"Different?"

"Before, back at school, I looked up to you."

"Looked up to me? You called me a sinner."

Beta's words spilled out. "I envied you because you were so good at cards. Because you weren't scared of teachers, or police, while I hung around on the fringes. Going off to prayer meeting with my Bible."

George felt baffled, fooled. "You mean now you're through with prayer meetings and all that?"

"No, not through. But I want to live a little too. When I found out that you were here at Halle, I thought if I could be friends with Müller, then maybe I could learn how to laugh and be happy and—"

Underneath the flickering streetlamp, George stopped short and threw back his head and laughed.

"And Müller thinks—if I can be friends with Beta—I can learn to be good! What a crazy fool!"

"You—want to learn to be good?"

Already George was wondering at his own feelings five minutes before. But he tried to explain. "Beta, I'm a divinity student now."

"Because your father says so."

"Wait. Be practical," George said. "The church is fussy. Drink too much, gamble too hard, and you're pushed off into some forsaken parish nobody wants."

Under the streetlamp, Beta was saying, "Oh!" soundlessly.

George went on. "That's not all. Half the time, I'm sick and tired of this silliness. But I don't know how to get away from it."

Still Beta stood there as if he didn't understand. In a way, George himself didn't. "So Beta, I thought you would teach me. But instead—"

"We can be friends anyway?" Again, that pathetic eagerness.

George nodded. "*Ja*. I guess. We will let the fates decide."

"Decide?"

"Which way we go. Your way—or mine. Who teaches whom? The fates decide. Or the *Devil!*"

Later, walking along toward his lodging alone, George looked up at the sky. The university buildings bulked gloomily against the blackness. He knew that if he wanted a decent parish, he had to change. Maybe Beta would help him find his way. Or maybe not. Briefly, he wondered about God, whom he hadn't really considered since Confirmation Day five years ago.

For some reason, his thoughts jumped from God to his father. He shivered, drew his coat tighter around him, and started up the stone steps to his lodging.

2

Welcomed as a Brother

The passports in the back pockets of every one of the five pairs of leather breeches striding out of Halle were unquestionably illegal. To get them, George Müller, his friend Beta, and the others had produced letters signed by their parents. But the signatures were all forgeries! George had forged his father's name with a flourish and malicious delight. And now all five were jubilantly on their way to Switzerland, their Alpenstock spikes clinking on the cobblestones. Why waste your summer stagnating in the boredom of your hometown? Holidays were meant for exploring the horizon's mountain peaks, for sampling foreign wines. So George had argued, and he had convinced his friends. Now with his broadbrim hat shoved jauntily on the back of his head, he was heading the party on its summer hike to Switzerland.

"Don't let George get out of sight," the fellow in the rear called ahead. "He's holding the purse. Can we trust him?"

As he shifted his knapsack from one shoulder to the other, George heard the coins jingling in the leather pouch. Beyond any doubt, the climb up Mount Rigi would be most rewarding!

In and out of villages, up and down mountain paths, through valleys—the five pairs of sturdy legs in their high woolen socks flashed by. When the boys were thirsty, they guzzled Swiss wine. When they were hot, they dove into mountain pools. When they were tired, they tumbled down in a field and slept until they felt like going on.

But often, long after the fellows were snoring in the hot sun, George was wide awake. And one day, propped up lazily against a tree trunk, he turned his head and looked cautiously over at Beta. But Beta—his blond hair rumpled, his face twitching from side to side to escape from the ants—was fast asleep. They all were, sprawled full length on the grass, knapsacks thrown down beside them.

Alert to the rhythm of Beta's snores, George leaned forward soundlessly, reaching for the leather pouch on the grass beside his knapsack. Opening it, he pulled out five smaller leather pouches. As Beta's snore hung in midair and faded out, George looked down sharply. But Beta's eyes were closed, and an ant tracked placidly across his forehead.

George moved hastily, but not a coin in the leather pouches jingled. He yanked the first small pouch open, and dipping in his fingers, pulled out some coins and transferred them all in one soundless motion to the second pouch. The knot of the third

pouch's drawstring was stubborn. George bit at it nervously, then swiftly felt for the largest coins and slipped them also into the second pouch.

"Well, Müller, you're a sly one!"

His hand jerked away, then moved back again to play with the pouch string casually. He did not turn his head.

"Beta? Thought you were napping."

Beta yawned shudderingly. "Birds sing too loud. What were you doing?"

"Nothing." The pouches were back on the grass again, plump and tidy.

"Well now, you were!"

"So that's your business?" George flicked a blade of grass against his lips.

"Working when the rest of us were napping, I mean. Catching up with your bookkeeping instead of loafing. You're a good fellow, George."

Flick—flick went the blade of grass.

"Glad we let you hold the purse." Beta gulped back a yawn. "I hate anything to do with figuring and adding."

The corners of George's mouth turned up in sudden pleasure. "If you hate figuring and bookkeeping, don't worry your head about it. Some of us happen to have a little talent for money."

"Be glad of it, Müller. It might come in handy someday."

The blade of grass paused in midair. George eyed his friend acutely. But Beta's eyes were closed, his mouth was open, and

he was getting ready to snore again. The little leather pouches dropped into the big pouch, and George knotted the drawstring. Sharp use of this talent for figures was getting him across Switzerland for half of what his friends were paying! Well, somebody had to hold the purse!

• • •

In the fall the forty-three-day holiday hike made good bragging at the long table under Der Grüner Tisch rafters. And always, Beta was there beside George, slipping him the cue for a funny story, laughing loudest at his jokes, reminding the barmaid when George's mug ran dry.

But sometimes, alone in his lodging, drinking his breakfast coffee, nibbling at his breakfast biscuit, George remembered wryly how the friendship had started. His curious flash of wanting to reform! It had been so foolish. Nine hundred divinity students at the University of Halle, and he wasn't any worse than any of them! Yet, it had all turned out well, after all. Beta had learned to drink like a man—well, almost—and cheated quite capably at cards. Beta was a good sport.

In November—the fall George was twenty—he and Beta sauntered from Der Grüner Tisch, and, shivering in the wind, hurried down the alley. At their usual corner, Beta peered up nervously as George said good night. "Meet you tomorrow. Like always? Right here?"

"No, George! There's something else," Beta blurted out. "I mean, I promised a friend of mine—man named Wagner—" Beta stammered. "I've known him for quite a while. Even—even before I met you. Now—lately, I mean—I go over there about once a week."

"Wagner has a card game?"

"No." Always when Beta was upset, his eyes bulged as if he were going to burst. Now they pushed out in agitation. "Look here, George, when I told you I wanted to live it up a little, I didn't mean I wanted to turn my back on everything forever."

"Go on."

"It's a prayer meeting at Wagner's!"

The strange term fell between them on the cobblestones almost with an audible echo. "A prayer meeting!"

"Don't make fun of me, George. We pray, sing hymns, hear a sermon."

He looked ridiculous, there in the shadows, his eyes popping. George put on a shocked expression.

"Sermons! And not in church? There's a law says you can't."

"It's a printed sermon. Somebody reads it."

"Then the law just covers you. This Wagner must be a daring soul. Maybe I'll meet him someday."

Beta only looked miserable.

Feeling cheated and deceived, George had an impulse to humiliate Beta, to make him pay for his turnabout face. "Tomorrow, in fact! We'll meet here. As usual. But we'll have prayer

meeting instead of drinks." He turned away and then he whirled back. "Who knows! Maybe the wind blows my way after all. Maybe I'll learn something from your goodness after all, Beta!" And he laughed all the way to his lodging, remembering Beta's face full of misery.

Wagner's house was tucked into a long row of gray stone houses on a side alley in Halle. But its double gables gave it a friendly look, almost as if it were nodding with hospitality. The front door was friendly too, twice as wide as its neighbor's doors, its oak paneling curved at the top. A few men in substantial cloaks entered the wide door as George and Beta came up to the house. George felt more curious than teasy.

Beta introduced him to his host in a diffident, embarrassed sort of way. Wagner pumped his hand.

"I welcome you as a brother, Herr Müller. Whatever you are, whoever, as a brother. Now find yourself a seat and a hymnbook. We're about ready with the hymns."

In the library, the substantial-looking men had drawn their chairs into a circle. Perched on an inadequate little stool in the inner ring, George folded his arms on his chest belligerently and stared around the room. Not a man there looked pale and saintly, he noticed. They dared to be nonconformists, had the nerve to meet in houses and read sermons when the state church frowned on it. George studied them with the same attention he might have given to a new novel by Molière, or a new, untried kind of beer.

In front of the great desk, Wagner stood up to make an introduction.

"... welcome all our visitors tonight and pray God's blessing on our souls. Brother Kayser, will you ask God to be with us tonight?"

From where George was, it looked for a long minute as if Brother Kayser had fainted. He stood, and then turned his back to the circle, facing his chair. His knees shot forward slightly, then buckled. But no one jumped to steady him. In a moment, he was kneeling squarely on the wooden floorboards.

George stared in fascinated amazement. A nonconformist kneeling in public?

Then Brother Kayser prayed, and it seemed to George that he was talking to Someone who moved into the room and stood in great power so close to this man that he had to submit in a physical way.

"... for Christ's sake. Amen." Never before had George Müller seen any man kneel down to pray.

Afterward as he wrapped his coat around him, he had a question. "Why, Beta? Why was he kneeling?"

Beta's eyes darted first to Wagner, then back to George. "Don't tease, George. It's always done. At least here. That's why."

"Not where I've been. But why?" He fumbled with his coat. Then he answered his own question. "I know why. He had to kneel because he wanted to tell God that he was humble and human, and that God was almighty and all-wise. He was showing his awe, his fear, his adoration, Beta!"

"Something like that."

"What a man he must be to do that!"

Wagner blocked the doorway, helping people into their coats, grasping hands. "Remember, Herr Müller, house and heart are open to you. Come back."

"To prostrate yourself before the all-powerful God. This is true worship," he thought out loud.

Wagner's hand paused on the doorknob. "Herr Müller?"

"Herr Wagner, what I saw in your house tonight, I'll never forget. A man who knelt to pray to his God!"

There was almost nothing to say to Beta on the way home, and George left him with relief at the corner. At his lodging at last, he walked through his neat, bare study room without lighting a lamp. Crossing over to his bedroom, he sat down in the darkness.

What had happened to him? Because he was curious, he had walked into a man's house expecting to sing a few hymns absentmindedly, and pick up a few phrases for goading Beta later.

What was there about a man kneeling on the floor beside a chair to shake him this way? Suddenly, he knew. It was because that man showed with every muscle of his body that he worshiped, feared, and really knew the living God. What kind of a man! And what kind of a God!

This was it, of course. For years—since confirmation—he had known the facts of the atonement, had understood perfectly that Jesus Christ had died on the cross to save a guilty world. But this

atonement had never lived, because to George God had not really lived. He understood that now.

And because he had seen a man kneeling to pray, he had seen God also.

At the window, he stared back at the gray university buildings beyond, fingered the unwashed breakfast coffee cups and crumbled the stale biscuit crumbs. Then he crossed back to his bed, and with stiff motions, he knelt.

The floor felt uncomfortable and cold to his knees. He did not know at first whether to bury his face in his arms or to stiffen his elbows on the yielding mattress.

But it didn't matter. He flung his arms straight out on the coverlet and throwing back his head, his eyes wide open but unseeing, he prayed, "When you kneel like this, low before the Highest One, meek before the Omnipotent One, then God is real." He sighed. "At last! God, tonight I am Yours!"

He stayed there on his knees for almost half an hour. Then, he got up, a little woodenly, and sat down again on his bed. He knew that something wonderful had happened to him. For a second he thought about his father, wondering if he would be glad or sorry when he learned about it. He assumed he would be glad, and then for no explainable reason at all, George Müller sighed.

Interested in the whole book?
Select your preferred book seller:

MOODY PUBLISHERS

AMAZON

BARNES & NOBLE

GOOGLE PLAY

CHRISTIANBOOK.COM

WALMART

TARGET