



That Way  
and  
No Other

*Following God through  
Storm and Drought*

AMY CARMICHAEL

*Introduction by Katelyn Beaty*

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*Following God through Storm  
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**Amy Carmichael**

*Edited by Carolyn Kurtz*



P L O U G H P U B L I S H I N G H O U S E

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# *Who Was Amy Carmichael?*

Carolyn Kurtz

THE SUN HAD BARELY RISEN when Amy Carmichael heard someone outside the bungalow to which she'd returned in the night after a year's absence. Stepping to the door, she saw a tense-looking woman with a small girl at her side. Amy invited them in.

Glancing around, the woman quickly explained that seven-year-old Preena had turned up the previous evening, having escaped a nearby Hindu shrine. Although she'd sheltered this unknown child overnight, she said, "I would not have dared keep her an hour longer. If you had not been here, I would have returned her to the temple." Pushing the girl toward Amy, the woman hurried away.

The child instinctively sensed that finding Amy Carmichael was a turning point. Fifty years later Preena recalled, “The first thing she did was to put me on her lap and kiss me. . . . From that day she became my mother, body and soul.” Amy, however, did not immediately grasp the moment’s significance; she did not realize she had just found her life’s vocation.

For four years, with a married British missionary couple, the Walkers, Amy had travelled by bullock cart throughout Tirunelveli and Travancore, in what are now the southern Indian states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Four young Indian women had joined them. The group would camp several weeks at some chosen spot, making evangelistic excursions to surrounding villages. It was during one such mission in March 1901 that they stopped at Pannaivilai, just in time for Preena to find them there.

The seven-year-old told Amy she’d run away before, sensing that temple dances led to something ugly. She had found her home, twenty miles distant, in three days. But temple women had tracked her down, and her mother, fearing divine vengeance, had handed her over. Back inside guarded temple walls, the women had punished Preena with hot iron brands. Now she stated she would stay with Amy forever.



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Mr. Walker made inquiries in the village to verify the child's story, and soon several women identifying themselves as servants of the gods arrived at Pannaivilai to reclaim her. A crowd gathered, but when Preena refused to go with them the people dispersed.

Preena began telling her new mother what went on in the temple – “things that darkened the sunlight,” wrote Amy. “It was impossible to forget those things. Wherever we went after that day we were constrained to gather facts about what appeared a great secret traffic in the souls and bodies of young children.”

Amy and one of her Indian comrades camped at the edge of a temple village to glean information. With her dark hair and eyes, Amy had only to darken her skin with coffee to pass as Indian when she and Ponnammal mingled with an evening throng of pilgrims. “We discovered nothing by asking questions. To ask was to close every door. We learned by quietly sharing as much as we could in the life of the people, by listening, not by questioning.” They found what Amy described as a fine net thrown over the land. “And the net is alive: it can feel and it can hold.”

The two learned that poverty or shame could drive a young mother – or a widow with no hope of finding her

daughter a husband – to sell her child to a temple. Or parents might offer an infant in exchange for spiritual merit. Once “wedded to the gods,” little girls were trained in temple chores and elaborate dances. But they also became sexual slaves to serve the lusts of priests and worshippers.

To explain the complexities of Hinduism, Amy quoted Sir Monier Williams: “It has its highly spiritual and abstract side, suited to the metaphysical philosopher; its practical and concrete side, suited to the man of affairs and the man of the world; its aesthetic and ceremonial side, suited to the man of poetic feeling and imagination.” Yet it also included “the most grotesque forms of idolatry and the most degrading varieties of superstition.”

Amy wrote to supporters in England, hinting at the sexual abuse disguised as religion, but her reports were rebuffed as exaggeration. She felt desperate. “The thing that we wanted to do appeared to be impossible. It was all disappointment, and never a little one saved.”

“At last a day came when the burden grew too heavy for me; and then it was as though the tamarind trees about the house were not tamarind, but olive, and under one of those trees our Lord Jesus knelt, and he knelt alone. And I knew that this was his burden, not mine.

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It was he who was asking me to share it with him, not I who was asking him to share it with me.”

AMY WAS BORN in Ireland on December 16, 1867, the first child of Catherine and David Carmichael, whose family owned the mills in the coastal village of Millisle. “Blueness of sea that looked happy, grayness of sea that looked anxious, greenness of sea that looked angry – these are my first memories of color,” Amy would write.

A Christian revival that swept the region in 1859 affected Catherine and David, and by extension their children. Amy’s earliest memory was that “after the nursery light had been turned low and I was quite alone, I used to smooth a little place on the sheet, and say aloud, but softly, to our Father, ‘Please come and sit with me.’” It was at bedtime, too, that she absorbed songs and stories. When her mother said one night that Jesus answers prayer, inspiration struck three-year-old Amy: before falling asleep, she prayed for her brown eyes to turn blue. Next morning, she eagerly mounted a chair before the mirror – and was astounded by brown eyes staring back. She ran to report the unanswered request. Perhaps her mother said the sensible words, or else they simply spoke themselves in her mind: “Isn’t no an answer?”

Young Amy could be stubborn. “The will of a child can be like steel,” she reminisced of an occasion when she refused to deliver soup to poor neighbors. “My mother did not know what to do with me, for I would not give in, and was not at all sorry.” As Mrs. Carmichael prepared to take the soup, Amy glimpsed her “reflected in the mirror. And then I found myself looking not at her hands tying on her bonnet, but at her face. Suddenly something melted inside me. In one moment I was in her arms.”

Catherine passed on to her children a love for all living things. Like her, Amy hated cruelty, and her first memory of feeling fury was on seeing another child torment a frog.

Naturally, lively interaction with four brothers and two sisters formed Amy’s character. One evening the returning Carmichael parents were horrified by the sight of Amy leading two brothers along the edge of the roof. Another time she and the same brothers took a rowboat onto Strangford Lough, where tides are said to be among the strongest in the world. Amy steered while the other two rowed, but when the seaward current grabbed the boat, their efforts were powerless. “Sing!” the boys commanded. Amy’s song caught the attention of the coast guard, who sped to the children’s rescue.

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Amy's escapades continued after she was sent to a Yorkshire boarding school at age twelve, and she was often in trouble. Yet it was here that she experienced her conversion, one day during silence in chapel. Although she had always trusted Jesus' love, resting in it as in her mother's arms, "I had not understood that there was something more to do, something that may be called coming to him, or opening the door to him, or giving oneself to him," she said later. "During those quiet few minutes, in his great mercy the Good Shepherd answered the prayers of my mother and father . . . and drew me, even me, into his fold."

Around this time financial difficulties hit the Carmichael mills, and Amy was called home from school. Then on April 12, 1885, David Carmichael died of pneumonia. He was fifty-four.

Amy, now seventeen, supported her mother by homeschooling the youngest children. One of her sisters recalled, "If anybody asked me what were the strongest impressions Amy made on me in her youth, I think I would say – her enthusiasms. She would kindle so quickly to anything that promised the betterment of the poor or unhappy. She was fired by the hope that socialism presented when she first read about it."

One Sunday the Carmichaels passed a shabbily dressed woman on the street, weighed down with bundles. “We had never seen such a thing in Presbyterian Belfast,” Amy said later. On impulse, she and her brothers turned to help the woman. But when other churchgoers passed by, Amy “felt crimson” with embarrassment. Just then, words from First Corinthians “flashed as it were through the gray drizzle: ‘Gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble . . . the fire shall try every man’s work.’ I knew something had happened that had changed life’s values. Nothing could ever matter again but the things that were eternal.”

Amy started gathering local children in her family’s home on Sunday afternoons; and in 1888 she oversaw construction of a metal hall for outreach to Belfast mill girls. With no money for the project, she prayed – and funds came. Trusting God’s provision became her norm. The hall, seating five hundred, opened in January 1889 and is still in use 130 years later. Amy dubbed it The Welcome, although privately she called it the “tin tabernacle.”

Starting in 1888, Amy attended several Keswick Conventions. Founded in 1875, the organization’s purpose was to deepen spiritual life, and Amy met

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sincere Christians at the yearly conference, including evangelist Dwight L. Moody, Hudson Taylor of the China Inland Mission, and Quaker Robert Wilson, a Keswick Convention founder now in his sixties, who soon became a close friend of the Carmichael family.

At age twenty-one, Amy moved to England, joining a mission to Manchester factory workers. She took a room in the slum, but her health suffered, and Wilson invited her to join his household in Keswick. She assumed she would support him the rest of his life. However on January 13, 1892, she distinctly heard the words, “Go ye,” which she understood as a call to overseas mission.

During the following months, as she regained her health, Amy studied the Bible and discussed mission with Wilson. “Thee must never say, thee must never even let thyself think, ‘I have won that soul for Christ,’” he told her one day, stopping the carriage by a slate quarry. “There was one who asked a stonebreaker at work by the roadside, ‘Friend, which blow broke the stone?’ And the stonebreaker answered, ‘The first one, and the last one, and every one between.’” Recalling his story years later, Amy added, “The joy of the winner and helper of souls is something apart from every other joy, but it is tarnished the moment the *I* comes in.”

Eight months after hearing the call to foreign missionary work, Amy moved to London for training at China Inland Mission headquarters. The organization's doctor ruled that her health was too poor for the conditions in China, so in March 1893 she sailed for an outpost in Japan instead. Her fifteen-month sojourn there taught her some valuable lessons, such as the importance of wearing local dress. She would never forget the challenge of a Japanese man who asked her to show him Jesus' way of life *being lived*.

Excruciating headaches forced her to leave in 1894 and she returned to Britain. Then a letter invited her to India. In October 1895, twenty-seven-year-old Amy set sail once more, this time for good. She would never see Britain or Ireland again. When she died in January 1951, at eighty-three, she had spent more than fifty-five years in her adopted country.

AFTER PREENA'S UNEXPECTED ARRIVAL, Amy continued to evangelize. Nicknamed "Elf," Preena held a special place in Amy's heart: "As evening by evening we returned from work, there was a child's loving welcome, little loving arms were round one's neck. I remember waking up to the knowledge that there had been a



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very empty corner somewhere in me that the work had never filled.”

The missionaries’ base was Dohnavur, a rather desolate village established by Europeans seventy years earlier. The Walkers chose the cottages and bungalow, and the group settled into this compound, encircled by a low mud wall and “haunted by flocks of noisy goats,” according to Amy. She was better impressed by the view. “Framed between red roofs and foliage, there are far blue glimpses of mountains . . . scarped with bare crags, which in the early morning are sometimes pink, and in the evening, purple. But the time to see the mountains in their glory is when the southwest monsoon is flinging its masses of cloud across to us. Then the mountains, waking from the lazy sleep of the long, hot months, catch the clouds on their pointed fangs, toss them back and harry them, wrap themselves up in robes of them, and go to sleep again.”

At Dohnavur, more little girls began arriving. In March 1904, an Indian pastor brought thirteen-day-old Amethyst – a special victory, as her mother had been about to sell her to a shrine. It was a shock when the little one died soon after. Amy later learned that young widows were often mistreated. Amethyst had been born after her father’s death.

By June there were seventeen young girls in Dohnavur. But during the next half year, two more infants died. After an epidemic took the last of these, Amy wrote:

When we went back to the empty nursery, and folded up the baby's little things and put them away, we felt as if we could not begin all over again. But we were shown that what we had been through was only meant to make us the more earnestly persist. So we set apart the sixth of each month, the date of our little Indraneela's passing, as a prayer day for the temple children, that they may be found and redeemed from temple service; and for ourselves that we may love them according to the love of the Lord. Sometimes in faraway places, upon that very day God has signally worked for the deliverance of a little one in danger, and always he has met us and renewed our strength. We have never had another Indraneela, but our empty nursery has been filled to overflowing.

When Amy realized her growing family needed a full-time mother, she struggled to reconcile homemaking with her missionary calling. "Could it be right to turn from so much that might be of profit . . . and become just nursemaids?" Then to her mind sprang a picture of Jesus

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washing his disciples' feet. "He took a towel – the Lord of Glory did that," she wrote. "Is it the bondservant's business to say which work is large and which is small, which unimportant and which worth doing? The question answered itself, and was not asked again."

And so Amy – now "Amma" to a houseful of daughters – experienced all the joys and anxieties of motherhood that she had thought would never be hers. To a Tamil proverb, "Children tie the mother's feet," she added, "we let our feet be tied for love of Him whose feet were pierced."

After Amy's decision to devote herself to the children, many more came. As keenly as the three deaths had been grieved, every arrival was celebrated. And since birthdates were rarely known, "coming days" were acknowledged each year. In 1906 the family grew to seventy, and by 1913 that number had doubled.

"With the coming of each new child we learned a little more of the private ways of this dreadful underworld of India," Amy wrote. "Sometimes we felt as though the things that we had seen and heard had killed forever the laughter in us. But children must have laughter round about them. Some guests to Dohnavur see nothing but the laughter side, the joy of flowers and babies; but a few see deeper."

As more children were rescued, more housing was needed. The very day that Amy suggested brickmaking in Dohnavur, to build a fire- and termite-proof nursery, a gift of money arrived – the exact amount needed. The other pressing need was for consecrated women to care for the little girls. Finding such women was a challenge. In Amy’s words, “The care of young children is not among the ‘honorable’ occupations of South India,” and some early helpers left more quickly than they’d come. Such disappointments convinced Amy that the team needed a clear commitment “to unite and fortify them.”

Ponnammal was among the first to join Amy. Mabel Wade, a Yorkshire nurse, came in 1907. By 1916 seven young Indian women, including Preena, had committed themselves. In March of that year they formed a Sisterhood of the Common Life, named for a fourteenth-century group of brothers who, according to Thomas à Kempis, “humbly imitated the manner of the apostolic life, and having one heart and mind in God, brought every man what was his own into the common stock.” Love, born of dedication to God, was the cord that bound the Indian and British sisters.

Perhaps Dohnavur’s “times of vital silence” stem from the Quaker worship of Amy’s months with Robert

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Wilson. Childhood memories of long Sunday sermons – when she’d devised tricks to combat boredom – played a role too, for she kept Dohnavur worship brief, commenting, “never forget that the human should not be drawn out like a piece of elastic and held so.”

Uppermost for Amy was guiding her children and coworkers toward Christ. She recalled how lonely she’d been when first in India, after making her final break with home and family. When mail arrived from England one day, “she ran to her bedroom, locked the door, knelt by the bed, and – read the letters aloud, one by one, to her heavenly Father.” Sharing the memory with a young Dohnavur sister, Amy said, “Treat him like that. Make him your chief love and friend.”

Over time, Amy framed a “pattern” for the members of the fellowship:

*My Vow.* Whatsoever thou sayest unto me, by thy grace I will do it.

*My Constraint.* Thy love, O Christ, my Lord.

*My Confidence.* Thou art able to keep that which I have committed unto thee.

*My Joy.* To do thy will, O God.

*My Discipline.* That which I would not choose, but which thy love appoints.

*My Prayer.* Conform my will to thine.

*My Motto.* Love to live; live to love.

*My Portion.* The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance.

She described the blessings that flowed from allowing this pattern to shape one's life: "We were first shown the crystal quality of loyalty, for our prayer-life together was to become the chief thing with us all. And it meant depth of conviction about certain matters, and singleness of mind. . . . It meant peacefulness, too, and . . . a spontaneous gaiety."

Amy made "one careful rule: the absent must be safe with us. Criticism, therefore, was taboo." The team understood; they were not to gossip against each other. "Learn to be a deep well," Amy told her Dohnavur family. "A deep well doesn't talk." More than once, noticing tension between members, she stopped a prayer meeting until trust was restored.

IN 1911 Amy learned that temples took boys as well as girls; boys were also in moral danger in dramatic

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companies. Seven years later the first little boy arrived in Dohnavur. By 1926, seventy or eighty had come. Two British men joined the Fellowship and led the boys' home for twenty years. Indian men eventually joined as well.

Amy suffered much during her last twenty years. One night in October 1931 she fell into an open pit, and she never fully recovered from her injuries. In the end she rarely left her room. Yet that suffering bore rich fruit as she continued to guide her community. Fifteen books went to print during those years.

Looking back in 1937, Amy wrote, "When the fellowship was first formed many called it utopian to expect that as more joined us we could ever continue to be of one mind in a house. And yet we saw vital unity in our God's pattern for a fellowship of Christians. Would he have set an impossible pattern?" And thinking toward the future, she said, "When decisions have to be made, don't look back and wonder what I would have done. Look up, and light will come to do what our Lord and Master would have you do."

Dohnavur Fellowship cared for boys until 1984. It still makes a home for girls. Although dedicating children to temples for prostitution was outlawed as early as 1924, the practice persists in some parts of the country, as do the economic and social pressures that lead desperate

families to give up their children. As in Amy's time, children at Dohnavur are raised to serve God through service to others. Many move on to higher education, marry, or find jobs. Some become Dohnavur coworkers. As of 2019, all members are Indian.

THE FOLLOWING TOPICALLY ARRANGED SELECTIONS from Amy Carmichael's writings are merely an introduction; they should inspire readers to read her books. She authored thirty-five, many of which are still in print. Her first, *From Sunrise Land* (letters from Japan), came out in 1895. *Things As They Are* (1903), *Overweights of Joy* (1906), *Beginning of a Story* (1908), *Lotus Buds* (1909), *Gold Cord* (1932), and *Though the Mountains Shake* (1943) chronicle the Dohnavur venture. Then there are biographies: *Walker of Tinnevely* (1916) tells of the missionary who trained Amy in Tamil and introduced her to Indian ways; *Ponnammal* (1918), *Mimosa* (1924), *The Widow of the Jewels* (1928), *Ploughed Under* (1934), and *Kohila* (1939) are stories of Dohnavur sisters; *Ragland* (1922) is about an early British missionary; and *Raj* (1926) depicts an Indian Robin Hood with whom Amy had several encounters. *If* (1938) and *His Thoughts Said . . . His Father Said . . .* (1941) offer answers to questions about life issues. *Rose*



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from *Briar* (1933), *Gold by Moonlight* (1935), and *Windows* (1937) offer meditations on nature – or on uplifting quotes and Bible verses – for readers dealing with grief or pain. A book of poetry set to music, *Wings* (1960), and a book of excerpts from her letters, *Candles in the Dark* (1981), were published after her death.

The passages in this little book have been chosen to help guide readers in discerning their own call to follow Jesus, and to challenge and encourage them to remain true in the all-or-nothing way of discipleship that Amy modeled. Like any disciple, Amy experienced discouragement, animosity, betrayal, and failure – along with quiet, decisive victories. Her hard-earned insights and wisdom can strengthen believers in the battles we face today.

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*Carolyn Kurtz, a member of the Bruderhof community, has compiled and edited two other titles in this series: The Reckless Way of Love: Notes on Following Jesus, by Dorothy Day, and The Scandal of Redemption: When God Liberates the Poor, Saves Sinners, and Heals Nations, by Oscar Romero.*

## *Reading Amy Carmichael Today*

Katelyn Beaty

READING ABOUT THE HEROINES of Christian missions, it's hard not to envy their sense of adventure. There's Lottie Moon and her band of Baptist missionaries riding across China, on one trip visiting forty-four villages in eleven days. There's Betsey Stockton, a freed slave who attended classes at Princeton Theological Seminary before sailing to Hawaii in 1823 to educate children. Elizabeth "Betty" Greene is the evangelical Amelia Earhart, a jungle pilot who co-founded Mission Aviation Fellowship after serving in World War II. In her biography, Greene recalls that she once was asked to transport a certain Marine Corps general, who didn't think women should fly planes, across Peru. After Greene made a dead-stick landing on a stretch of the

Amazon River, the general seemed to feel differently about women pilots.

The story of modern missions is the story of adventurous women. They are remembered for their radical service to God, yes, but also for challenging conventions of womanhood, even while affirming traditional gender roles. Together, their biographies attest to a time when women, though often restricted in their own cultures, could travel the globe as evangelists and entrepreneurs. Global missions gave them a chance to preach, teach, and lead in ways they couldn't have back home.

By the late nineteenth century, more women than men were in the missions field. These women seem largely unhindered by Victorian ideals of separate spheres for men and women and the idealization of marriage and motherhood. To be sure, many of the missionaries were wives and mothers. But many others were prepared to forgo marriage and motherhood as well as home and homeland for the sake of their cause.

Such was the case for Amy Carmichael. Born into a devout Presbyterian family in Ireland, it seems she possessed a nascent calling to give her life to God. By age twenty, after the death of her father, she was caring for her younger siblings and for Belfast mill girls, who

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worked grueling hours in poor conditions with few protections. In response, Amy raised funds to build an outreach hall for the mill workers. Here and throughout her life, Amy's natural stubbornness and compassion combined to inspire acts of great service.

Amy's role models were men: Dwight L. Moody, Robert Wilson, and Hudson Taylor, the father of modern missions and founder of China Inland Mission. After hearing Taylor speak at a revivalist Keswick Convention in 1887, Amy heard God say, "Go ye." She understood that, despite her physical weakness owing to neuralgia, she would follow in Taylor's footsteps. After a brief stint in Japan, she landed in India, the locus of her ministry. She never returned home.

DOHNAVUR, THE VILLAGE IN SOUTHERN INDIA where Amy Carmichael lived until her death in 1951, would soon become an oasis of children's laughter and verdant gardens. But along the way there were many obstacles to confront, both within and without. Amy faced loneliness, discouragement, and discord among her staff, in addition to the threat of disease and malnutrition, cultural barriers, and local animosity. Some locals accused her and the other missionaries of kidnapping

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children. Amy was convinced, however, that her greatest opposition was Satan, who wanted to keep Indian children trapped in the “darkness” of Hinduism.

What sounds like cultural imperialism to our ears takes on a new dimension when we learn the fate of many children dedicated to the service of Hindu gods. In the book *Lotus Buds*, Amy recounts a conversation with a medical missionary who says she heard “frightened cries, indignant cries, sometimes sharp cries as of pain” from the temple next door. After inquiring with police, who assured her that the children were “only” being beaten, the missionary realized that the children were being sexually abused.

But Amy also showed a shrewdness rare among missionaries operating in countries ruled by the British Empire. She saw that poor families turned to temple prostitution for economic and social security. One mother whose children participated in the rituals contrasted the glory of having her daughter dance before high-caste Hindus with “the groveling life of your Christians.” The mother defended the temple practices as ancient custom, and said changing them would be arrogant. Here, we recall generations of Christian missions that led to so much cultural destruction done in

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the name of Jesus around the globe. But Amy found a way to honor India's beliefs and customs while opposing the abuse. "The thing we fight is not India or Indian, in essence of development," she writes. "It is something alien to the old life of the people. . . . It is like a parasite which has settled upon the bough of some noble forest tree – on it, but not of it." Today, development workers might recall Amy Carmichael's sensitivity while addressing female genital mutilation in Africa and the Middle East. Likewise, missionaries who hope to end polygamy in sub-Saharan Africa might address the underlying poverty that leads many women to seek economic security in a shared husband.

LIKE MANY WOMEN in the missions field, Amy Carmichael remained single for life. According to biographer Ruth Ann Tucker, she struggled early on with a fear of the future, and the possibility of lifelong loneliness. During her fifteen months in Japan, she went to be alone with God in a cave. "The devil kept on whispering, 'It is all right now, but what about afterwards? You are going to be very lonely.'" Amy prayed desperately, and God answered, "None of them that trust in me shall be desolate." If Amy struggled with singleness for the next fifty

years, she does not mention it much in her writing. In fact, she might have wished for more time alone. As more children arrived at Dohnavur, Amy (now “Amma,” or mother) struggled with the responsibilities of mothering and homemaking. In *Overweights of Joy*, she notes that a whole year has passed since she last wrote. “For we can only write in odd corners of time, and sometimes time does not seem to have any odd corners. Quiet is even rarer.” By 1913, 140 children were in her care, and several English and Indian women had joined her in the work. By 1916, Amy Carmichael had established the Sisterhood of the Common Life, a Protestant order that imitated medieval communities of celibate men and women. The sisters were expected to remain single; if they intended to marry, they had to leave. Absent a husband and biological children, Amy nonetheless stitched together a family in the form of her rescued children and her sisters in the mission. At the time of Amy’s death, the Dohnavur family numbered around nine hundred.

Many of Amy Carmichael’s admirers – most notably Elisabeth Elliot, widow of slain missionary Jim Elliot – have seen in her an icon of submissive femininity in her whole-life surrender to God. In one of her popular essays on womanhood, Elliot writes that the

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essence of femininity is surrender: first, in the surrender of “her independence, her name, her destiny, her will, herself” in marriage vows and the marriage bed, and later in her bodily surrender to welcoming new life in her womb. “Perhaps the exceptional women in history have been given a special gift – a charism – because they made themselves nothing,” writes Elliot, who goes on to compare Amy Carmichael to Mary the mother of Jesus.

Indeed, Amy Carmichael’s books repeat the theme of sometimes painful surrender to the will of God, a constant battle between self-will and submission to a higher calling. Yet we would be mistaken to only see in her missions a lesson in acquiescence. Her life’s work is nothing if not an expression of determination, grit, and leadership – attributes that Elliot and others would very well call masculine. Dohnavur grew as it did precisely because she had initiated and led a campaign to rescue children from the world of temple prostitution. According to scholar Nancy Jiwon Cho, Amy Carmichael developed in her extensive writing a “particular theology” that displays “hope for the development of an authentic Indian Christianity that responds to the experiences and needs of Indians” – a theology that would inspire subsequent generations of Christian



women and men alike. If men are like Christ in their role as initiator, protector, and provider, it's hard not to see in Amy Carmichael an expression of such Christ-like masculinity: in initiating rescue efforts, protecting the most vulnerable, and providing a home and spiritual comfort for hundreds of people. Then again, the self-surrender that Amy Carmichael writes about is also the surrender of Christ to the will of his Father. Thus, Amy Carmichael provides not so much a lesson in feminine submission as in Christian submission. There is no biblical call to take up one's masculine or feminine cross – only to surrender all to the will of God.

By the time of Amy Carmichael's death in 1951, women's global missions had started to lag. According to journalist Wendy Murray, the modernist–fundamentalist controversies earlier in the century, coupled with postwar prosperity and the baby boom, had circumscribed women's roles to the home. The mainstream feminist backlash to these narrower roles spurred its own conservative Christian backlash – what Ruth Ann Tucker has called a “neofundamentalism” that arguably continues to this day. Major missions organizations such as the Southern Baptist International Mission Board have in recent decades emphasized “proclamation ministries”

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such as direct evangelism and church planting – activities these organizations still reserve for men. Consequently, the number of women joining such missionary efforts has dwindled. American evangelicalism arguably remains in a neofundamentalist mode as a reaction to radically shifting gender norms in the culture at large. If she lived today, would Amy Carmichael be free to be Amy Carmichael?

Nevertheless, Amy Carmichael's life testifies that God raises up women in all times and places to take the gospel to the literal ends of the earth. Priscilla joined her husband to spread the good news in Rome, Greece, and Asia Minor in a time when women were largely seen as property and unfit for education. The aforementioned Betsey Stockton received seminary education as a freed slave, her very presence in a university classroom a testament against the racism woven into US law and custom. Amy Carmichael stepped aboard boats and trains to make her home halfway around the world, in a remote Indian village, to preach good news for the poor and freedom for the captives.

MANY YOUNG PEOPLE DREAM of embarking on such an adventure, to rescue trafficking victims, lift people

in developing countries out of poverty, or otherwise “change the world.” But Amy Carmichael’s intrepid spirit and daring exploits are not the only reason her words still resonate a century later. Her thoughts in the pages that follow show a struggle common to every person who sets out to follow Jesus – the greatest adventure of all. In founding and guiding a community of women committed to providing a home for children, she learned what it takes for an individual to remain on such a demanding path, and what it takes to hold such a community together. The insights she imparts in dozens of books – many written during long years of convalescence and contemplation after a crippling accident – though specific to her time and place, are not just for women called to missionary work. Whatever the way we each might be called to serve God and humanity, Amy Carmichael’s words in this little book can be a guiding light through the times of storm and drought that we will surely face.

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# I

## *Nothing Kept Back*

DON'T SAY "IT DOESN'T MATTER" about anything (except your own feelings), for everything matters. Everything is important, even the tiniest thing. If you do everything, whether great or small, for the sake of your Savior and Lord, then you will be ready for whatever work he has chosen for you to do later.

IF THE NEXT STEP IS CLEAR, then the one thing to do is to take it. Don't pledge your Lord or yourself about the steps beyond. You don't see them yet.

BUT THE TIME FOR CHOICE is passing, and the chance to choose comes only once. I have often sat on the rocks by our mountain river and known that never for one moment was I looking at the water of a moment before.

OFTEN HIS CALL IS TO FOLLOW in paths we would not have chosen. But if in truth we say, “Anywhere, Lord,” he takes us at our word and orders our goings, and then he puts a new song in our mouths, even a thanksgiving unto our God (Ps. 40:2–3). There is wonderful joy to be had from knowing that we are not in the way of our own choice. At least I have found it so. It gives a peculiar sort of confidence that even we – we who are nothings – are being “ordered” in our goings. It is very good to be “ordered” by our beloved Lord.

WE WALK ON ROCK, not on quicksand, when we obey. But there is no promise that the rock will be a leveled path, or like the carpet of roses that Cleopatra spread for the officers of Mark Antony.

Sooner or later God meets every trusting child who is following him up the mountain and says, “Now prove

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that you believe this that you have told me you believe, and that you have taught others to believe.” Then is your opportunity. God knows, and you know, that there was always a hope in your heart that a certain way would not be yours. “Anything but that, Lord,” had been your earnest prayer. And then, perhaps quite suddenly, you found your feet set on that way, that and no other. Do you still hold fast to your faith that he maketh your way perfect?

It does not look perfect. It looks like a road that has lost its sense of direction; a broken road, a wandering road, a strange mistake. And yet, either it is perfect, or all that you have believed crumbles like a rope of sand in your hands. There is no middle choice between faith and despair.

**DON'T BE SURPRISED** if temptations come. The one way is to throw yourself, everything you have to give, into the service to which you have been called. Paul spoke of himself as an offering poured out on “the sacrifice and service of your faith” (Phil. 2:17). That’s what you must be, nothing kept back. And as you give all, you find all.

OUR LORD DID NOT SAY, “Go ye into all the world if you feel an ardent flame of love to all the people in it.” He just said, “Go ye,” and as we obey, he gives us all we need to lead them to him. And of course as we most of all need love, he gives it to us.

I THINK OFTEN WE ACCEPT the cross in theory, but when it comes to practice, we either do not recognize it for what it is, or we recognize it and try to avoid it. This we can always do, for the cross is something that can be taken up or left, just as we choose. It is *not* illness (that comes to all), or bereavement (that also is the common lot of man). It is something *voluntarily* suffered for the sake of the Lord Jesus, some denial of self that would not be if we were not following him.

THE STORY OF MARY breaking her pot of ointment (John 12:3) made me think of some among us who love their Savior and yet have not broken theirs. Something is held back, and so there is no outpouring of that love, no fragrance in the house. It is shut up, not given.

The days are passing so quickly. Soon it will be too late to pour all we have on his feet.

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SOME FIND THEMSELVES in the midst of clouds and darkness because of the sinful deeds of others. And yet the wrongdoing of another should have no power to darken the way of a child of God. . . . The same word is comfort if the trouble be the result of our own doing. A wrong turning was taken at the foot of the hill. A wrong decision was made which has affected the whole course of life. The husband has been handicapped by a wife who can never enter into his deepest thoughts. The wife has been held from the highest she knew by the husband whose eyes were on the plains. Divided counsels in the bringing up of children tell upon the children. That means sorrow.

These circumstances were not the choice of God for those lives, but it is impossible to go back and begin again, and each day will bring its trials of patience and its private griefs.

View all this as a glorious chance to prove the power of your God to keep you in peace and in hope and in sweetness of spirit. In that sense “expose yourself” to those circumstances. Do not fret against them. Do not fret those who cause them to be by a dour countenance. *“Beloved, let us love”* is a wonderful word for such difficult situations. And love is happy, not dour.



BUT HE THAT IS DOWN need fear no fall. He that is down cannot get between God and his glory. And we knew then that there was nothing that he could not do through us if only we were nothing.

A CRUCIFIED LIFE cannot be self-assertive. It cannot protect itself. It cannot be startled into resentful words. The cup that is full of sweetness cannot spill bitter drops however sharply knocked.

I HAVE BEEN ASKING that our dearest Lord may have the joy (surely it must be a joy to him) of saying about each one of us, and about us all as a little company of his children: "I can count on him, on her, on them for *anything*. I can count on them for peace under any disappointment or series of disappointments, under any strain. I can trust them never to set limits, saying, "Thus far, and no farther." I can trust them not to offer the reluctant obedience of a doubtful faith, but to be as glad and merry as it is possible."

WE HAVE HAD FREQUENT JOY in the conversion of workmen during the last few years; most have been won

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not so much by what was said, as by what they saw in the everyday lives of the brothers, Indian or European, with whom they had to do. After they had seen something that they recognized as genuine and not of earth, they were willing to listen to the heavenly message, and then the entrance of our Savior's words brought light. "What made me want to be a Christian was seeing D.'s life. He never passed bad work, but he never lost his temper," said one in answer to a question about how he first became interested. D. came to us some years ago – a very thirsty and very unhappy boy. His thirst was quenched, his soul revived, and now the men he oversees bear this witness.

OUR MASTER HAS NEVER PROMISED us success. He demands obedience. He expects faithfulness. Results are his concern, not ours. And our reputation is a matter of no consequence at all.

ONE DAY I FELT the "I" in me rising hotly, and quite clearly – so clearly that I could show you the place on the floor of the room where I was standing when I heard it – the word came, "See in it a chance to die." To this day that word is life and release to me, and it has been to

many others. See in this which seems to stir up all you most wish were *not* stirred up – see in it a chance to die to self in every form.

IN THE MOUNTAIN FORESTS to the west of Dohnavur our children find the cocoon of the atlas moth. It hangs from a twig, like a small brown bag tied up and left there and forgotten, a mere two inches of papery bag, and however often we see it we are never prepared for the miracle that emerges. For miracle it is: a large, almost bird-like creature struggles slowly through the very narrow neck of the bag. It has wings of crimson and pink, and blended green of various soft tones, shading off into terra cotta, brown, old-gold. Each wing has a window made of a clear substance like a delicate flake of talc, and on the edge of each is a pattern of wavy lines or dots, or some other dainty device. From wing-tip to wing-tip, nine, sometimes ten, inches of beauty, one of God's lovely wonders – that is what comes out of the brown paper bag. Nothing preserved in a glass case can show it, for the colors fade, but fresh from the hands of its Creator it is like something seen in a dream, pure faerie.

The radiant emergence of butterfly from chrysalis has often been used to illustrate that which will be when we

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put on immortality, but I am thinking of this exquisite thing in another way now. What if our life within these detaining months or years be like the life within the dull brown bag of the cocoon? One day something will emerge to the glory of his grace. Can we not, then, sustained by the bread of heaven and the good wine, continue in this hidden labor and spiritual fight till the sunset colors kindle and the stars appear?

