AMY CARMICHAEL



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Amy Carmichael

A Belfast Mission Hall, the Children of Dohnavur, and a Mother Called Amma

Ochorus

Portraits of Courage – Amy Carmichael

A Belfast Mission Hall, the Children of Dohnavur, and a Mother Called Amma

Ochorus Originals

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Preface

"Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."
— Matthew 18:14, ASV

The earlier volumes of this series told of a Chinese church leader who died in a Communist labour camp, an American who prayed his way through the villages of the Punjab, a Dutch watchmaker who hid Jews behind a false wall, a Scottish mill girl who went alone up the rivers of Calabar, an African bishop who had once been sold as a slave, an Indian widow who built a home for thousands of outcast women, an Oxford don who was found by God against his will, and an American widow who carried her small daughter into the Ecuadorian forest. This ninth volume tells the story of an Irish woman who went to South India in 1895, never came home, and spent more than half a century making a family out of children whom nobody else was able, or willing, to keep.

Amy Beatrice Carmichael was born in 1867 in Millisle, a village on the coast of County Down, and died in 1951 at Dohnavur, a village near the southern tip of India. Between those two places lie a Belfast mission hall for mill girls, a slum in Manchester, a country house in the Lake District, fifteen months in Japan, a few months in Ceylon, a bullock cart on the rutted roads of the Tinnevelly district, and a compound of red-tiled nurseries under the mountains, which grew in her lifetime into the Dohnavur Fellowship. The children there called her *Amma*, which in

Tamil means "mother." When she died, that one word was all they put over her grave.

A Link with the Last Volume

Readers who have come to this book from the volume before it will notice a thread between them. In 1987 Elisabeth Elliot published a long biography of Amy Carmichael, and took its title from a saying attributed to her, that missionary life is simply a chance to die. Elisabeth Elliot had read Amy Carmichael since her student years, and she found in her a writer who would not pretend. The two women never met. One was born in the reign of Queen Victoria and the other in the year of the General Strike. But they shared a conviction that a missionary story should be told as it happened, without the gilding that home audiences liked, and that God is honoured by the truth more than by a flattering account of his servants. This book tries to tell Amy Carmichael's story in that spirit.

Why Courage?

Some of her courage was of the visible kind. She went out to Asia after a mission board had turned her down on grounds of health. She spent years travelling with a band of Indian women through villages where a foreign woman was a curiosity and the gospel was an offence. She took in a runaway child who belonged, by local custom, to a temple, knowing that the women who had kept her could bring the law down on her for doing it. For half a century she sheltered children at risk of the same fate, and she was threatened, slandered and taken to court for it.

But this book will suggest that there were quieter kinds of courage in her life, and that they may have cost her more. There was the courage to

write home the truth when her readers wanted good news. Her first book about India, *Things as They Are*, published in 1903, told English Christians that most days on the mission field ended exactly as they began, and that conversion in caste India usually meant the loss of everything. Some readers in England did not believe her. There was the courage to stay. She never took a furlough in fifty-five years, and she buried many of the people she loved most in Indian soil. And there was the courage, in her last twenty years, of lying in one room in pain, unable to walk far, and going on with the work by prayer and by pen.

How This Book Is Written

Like the earlier volumes, this book tries to be honest about its sources. Amy Carmichael was a prolific writer, and her own books are the first source for her life. Those published before 1929, including *Things as They Are* (1903), *Overweights of Joy* (1906), *Lotus Buds* (1909) and *Walker of Tinnevelly* (1916), are in the public domain in the United States, and this book quotes from them, chiefly from *Things as They Are*, which is in the Ochorus library. Her later books, including *Gold Cord* (1932), her history of the Fellowship, and the little devotional book *If* (1938), are named so that readers can find them, but they are not quoted here, out of respect for the rights that may still attach to them in some countries.

The two standard biographies are Frank Houghton's *Amy Carmichael of Dohnavur*, published in 1953 by a writer who was given access to her papers, and Elisabeth Elliot's *A Chance to Die*. Both are still in copyright. This book has used them only as guides to facts and dates, and it does not quote or follow their wording. It tells her life in its own words. Where the sources disagree, or where a well-known story rests only on a later retelling, this book says so.

Two subjects need particular care. The first is the system of temple dedication that Amy Carmichael spent her life opposing, by which some girls in South India were given in childhood to temples and brought up to a life that ended, for many of them, in sexual exploitation. That is the hardest part of her story. This book handles it honestly, without graphic detail, and with respect for the Hindu people among whom she lived, most of whom had nothing to do with it and many of whom opposed it. Indian reformers fought it too, and it was Indian legislators who finally outlawed it. The second is that Amy Carmichael was a woman of her time and her empire. She sometimes wrote about Hinduism in language that is painful to read, and she ran Dohnavur with an authority that some who worked with her found hard to bear. A Christian biography should neither hide that nor make it the whole story.

Scripture in This Book

As in the earlier volumes, all Scripture is quoted from the American Standard Version of 1901, which is in the public domain. Each chapter opens with a passage that carries its theme. Amy Carmichael herself read the older Authorised Version, and where the words she remembered differ from the ASV, this book points it out.

The verse at the head of this preface is the end of a parable about a shepherd who leaves ninety-nine sheep to look for one that has gone astray. Jesus said, "it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." Amy Carmichael built her life on that sentence. She was not a strategist of mass movements or a leader of crowds. Her work, as she saw it, was to go after one child, and then another, and then another, because each one mattered to God. This book is the story of how she did it, and of what it cost.

Introduction: The Legend and Her Own Books

"For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth."
— 2 Corinthians 13:8, ASV

A Verse She Chose Herself

When Amy Carmichael sat down in 1902 to introduce her first book about India, she put a sentence of Paul's at the head of it: "We can do nothing against the Truth, but for the Truth." She quoted it from the Authorised Version, and it is the same sentence that stands, in the words of the American Standard Version, at the head of this chapter. Under it she wrote a short paragraph about her book. "This, the book, has tried to tell the Truth," she said. "That is all it has to say about itself."

It is a good standard for a biography, and it is the standard this book tries to keep. That is harder than it sounds, because Amy Carmichael has become a legend, and legends are not easily corrected.

The Legend

The popular story of her life is told in sermons, children's books, devotional websites and missionary calendars, and much of it is true. She did grow up by the sea in County Down. She did gather mill girls into a hall in Belfast. She did go to Japan, and then to India, and she never came home. She did take in a little girl named Preena who had run away from a temple,

and she did spend the rest of her life sheltering children. She did fall, in 1931, and spend her last twenty years largely confined to her room. She did write many books that are still in print.

But the legend has also grown in the telling. Some versions say that she rescued a thousand temple prostitutes, as if the children she sheltered were all taken out of temples. Most were not. Many were babies or small children brought to Dohnavur because they were thought to be in danger of being given to temples, and many others came for other reasons, as orphans, as unwanted daughters, or as the children of women who could not keep them. Some versions say that her work ended the dedication of girls to temples in India, or that the practice was outlawed in 1948 because of her. The law that ended it in the Madras Presidency was passed in October 1947, after a long campaign led by Indian reformers, above all the physician and legislator Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy, and by members of the communities concerned. Missionaries had a part in the debate, but it was not their law.

Other stories are true in substance but uncertain in detail. The best-known story from her childhood, of a little girl praying for blue eyes and discovering in the morning that they were still brown, comes from her own memory, told late in life, and the ages given for it vary. The story of her staining her skin with coffee to pass unnoticed into places where a European could not go is told in many popular books; it is consistent with what she says about wearing Indian dress, but the details have been embroidered. The saying most often quoted from her, that "missionary life is simply a chance to die," is widely attributed to her and gave Elisabeth Elliot the title of her book, but it is rarely given with a date or a source.

None of this makes her smaller. It is simply the kind of growth that happens to the stories of people who are loved. This book tries to separate what is known from what is told.

Her Own Books

The first source for her life is what she wrote herself. She wrote a great deal: books, booklets, poems, hymns, and a stream of letters to friends, to supporters, and to the members of her own Fellowship. The early books were mostly written from the field, in the form of letters or sketches, and they are vivid and immediate. *From Sunrise Land* (1895) collected her letters from Japan. *Things as They Are* (1903) told of village work in the Tinnevelly district, and its sequel *Overweights of Joy* (1906) set beside it the joys she felt the first book had not had room for. *Lotus Buds* (1909) described the first babies and small girls at Dohnavur and the system from which many of them had been kept. *Walker of Tinnevelly* (1916) was her memoir of the missionary with whom she worked for sixteen years. Later came biographies of Indian Christians, books of verse and devotion, and *Gold Cord* (1932), her own history of the Fellowship.

These books are invaluable, but they need to be read for what they are. They were written for supporters, and she shaped them. She changed names, often giving the people in them English translations of their Tamil names, such as Pearl-eyes, Star and Jewel of Victory, to protect them and to make them memorable. She sometimes compressed time. She wrote in the language of the Keswick holiness movement, in which every event was part of a spiritual battle, and in which the religion of her neighbours was often described as the work of the devil. And she was, by her own admission, a writer who left a great deal out. In *Things as They Are* she said repeatedly that she could not tell the whole truth, because it could not be printed.

The Biographers

The first full life, Frank Houghton's *Amy Carmichael of Dohnavur* (1953), was written by a senior figure in the China Inland Mission, who was given access to her letters and papers. It is the source of many of the dates and details that later books repeat. It is also the work of an admirer, written within two years of her death for readers who loved her. Elisabeth Elliot's *A Chance to Die* (1987) drew on Houghton, on the Dohnavur archives, and on interviews with people who had known Amy, and it is more willing to see her faults. Iain Murray's *Amy Carmichael: Beauty for Ashes* (2015) is a more recent life from within the same tradition. All three remain in copyright, and this book has used them for facts and not for their words.

Beside the biographies there is a smaller body of scholarly work. Historians of mission have looked at her place in the Keswick movement and at the long quarrel between her and the young Stephen Neill, later a bishop and a noted historian of Christian missions, who worked at Dohnavur for little more than a year in 1924 and 1925. Historians of South India have studied the reform movement against temple dedication, in which missionary writing, including hers, played a part. Some of them, notably Davesh Soneji, have argued that the reformers' language did lasting harm to the hereditary communities of temple dancers and musicians, whose art and dignity were swept away along with the abuses. This book does not adopt every judgement of these scholars, but it has listened to them.

What This Book Is, and Is Not

This book is a narrative life. It follows Amy Carmichael from Millisle to Dohnavur, and it tries to give the people around her their due: her mother,

who outlived her husband by nearly thirty years and let her eldest daughter go, first to another household and then to the far side of the world; Robert Wilson, the Quaker who treated her as a daughter; Thomas Walker, who taught her Tamil and fought beside her for sixteen years; Ponnammal, the young widow who led the women's band; Arulai, the girl convert who became one of the pillars of Dohnavur; and the children themselves, so far as the sources let us see them.

It is not an account of her devotional teaching. Her poems and meditations deserve their own reading, and the best way to meet them is in her own books. The present book quotes her own words chiefly from *Things as They Are*, which readers can find complete in the Ochorus library, and it quotes sparingly.

Above all, this book does not try to make her a saint without shadows. She could be fierce, and she could be imperious. She sometimes wrote about Hinduism with a contempt that was common among missionaries of her day, and that Hindu readers had every reason to resent. She guarded the children of Dohnavur with a protectiveness that some observers saw as love and others as control. She was also brave, self-forgetting, funny, tender, and utterly given to the God she served. Paul said that he could do nothing against the truth, but only for it. A true portrait will serve her memory, and her Lord, better than a flattering one.

Brown Eyes

"For thou didst form my inward parts: Thou didst cover me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks unto thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: Wonderful are thy works; And that my soul knoweth right well."
— Psalm 139:13-14, ASV

A Village by the Sea

Millisle is a small village on the eastern shore of the Ards peninsula in County Down, in the north of Ireland. It looks out across the Irish Sea, and on a clear day the hills of Galloway in Scotland can be seen on the horizon. In the middle of the nineteenth century it was a place of farms, fishing boats and mills, where the wind and the tide set the rhythm of the day. Amy Beatrice Carmichael was born there on 16 December 1867.

Her father, David Carmichael, was a miller, and so were the men of his family before him. The Carmichaels were of Scottish descent, like many of the Presbyterian families of County Down, whose ancestors had crossed the narrow sea in the seventeenth century. They ran flour mills, and in Amy's childhood the business was prosperous. Her mother, Catherine Jane Filson, came from a family of similar background, and she was by every account a woman of warm and steady faith. Amy was the first of their seven

children. Brothers and sisters followed in quick succession, and the house was full and noisy.

The family belonged to the Presbyterian church, and their faith was the faith of the Ulster Presbyterians of their day: serious, scriptural, and rooted in the Westminster Shorter Catechism, which children learned by heart. Sunday was kept with care. Family prayers were a fixed part of the day. The great Ulster revival of 1859 had swept through the province less than a decade before Amy was born, and it had left behind it a strong evangelical piety, with an expectation that faith would be personal, that conversion was real, and that the Bible spoke directly to the soul. It was in that atmosphere that Amy grew up.

The Shorter Catechism begins with a question that every Presbyterian child in Ulster could answer by heart: "What is the chief end of man?" The answer is: "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever." It is a sentence that holds together two things that later piety often pulled apart, duty and delight. Amy Carmichael would spend her life on the first half of it, in obedience that sometimes looked severe to those around her. But those who knew her best always spoke of the second half too: of the joy she found in God, in children, in birds and flowers and mountain streams, and of the gaiety that never quite left her even in pain. The catechism had given her both halves before she could understand either.

A Strong-Willed Child

She was, by all accounts, a lively and wilful little girl. The stories told of her childhood, most of which come from her own memory and from her family, show a child who was quick, imaginative, and not easily controlled. She loved the sea, the shore, the boats in the harbour and the open air. She was the eldest, and she led her brothers into adventures. She was also, from

very early, a child who took prayer seriously, and who expected that God would answer it.

The discipline in the Carmichael house was firm, in the way of Victorian families, and Amy seems to have known it well. Later she would speak with gratitude of parents who were strict and loving at once, who expected obedience and also made the children feel deeply secure. She was not a meek child, and she was never a meek woman. But she learned at home that love and authority belong together, and that lesson, for good and for ill, shaped the way she would one day lead a household of her own.

The Prayer for Blue Eyes

The best-known story of her childhood is one she told herself, many years later. Her own eyes were brown, and she wished they were blue. Her mother had taught her that God hears and answers prayer, and so one night she asked him to change the colour of her eyes. In the morning she ran to the mirror, fully expecting to see blue eyes looking back at her. They were still brown. In the versions of the story that she told and that her biographers repeat, she was disappointed, but she also learned something that she never forgot: that no is an answer too. God had heard her; he had simply said no.

The ages given for the story vary, from about three to about five, and it is the kind of memory that grows in the telling. But it has lasted because of what came after. Decades later, in South India, Amy Carmichael wore Indian dress and, on some of her journeys, darkened her skin, so that she could move among people who would have closed their doors to a European. A woman with blue eyes would have been noticed at once. Brown eyes could pass. Whether she herself drew that connection at the time, or whether it was drawn later by those who told her story, it became

one of the most loved parables of her life: a child's prayer refused because God had a better answer in mind.

It is worth pausing over the parable, because it is easy to make it too neat. Not every unanswered prayer turns out, years later, to have a clear explanation. Amy Carmichael herself would pray many prayers in India that were not answered as she asked, for children who died, for friends who were not healed, for converts who went back. She learned to live without explanations. But the child at the mirror in Millisle had learned the first lesson of a long school: that God is not a vending machine, that he is free, and that his refusals can be trusted. The psalmist says that God formed us in our mother's womb, and that we are "fearfully and wonderfully made." The child who wanted different eyes was being taught, before she understood it, that she had been made as she was for a purpose.

Home and Its Shelter

The Carmichael home in Millisle was a comfortable one, at least in Amy's early years, and the children would later be sent away to school. She remembered her childhood as a happy one, and she remembered both her parents with deep affection.

Two things about that home matter for the rest of her story. The first is that it was a home in which children were taken seriously as persons who could know God. Prayer was not something adults did on their behalf; it was something they did themselves. When Amy later insisted, against the habits of many missionaries of her day, that small Indian children could truly know and love Christ, and should be taught to pray in their own words, she was passing on what she had been given.

The second is that it was a home that would not last. Within a few years the business that supported it would decline, the family would move to

Belfast, and David Carmichael would die young, leaving his widow with seven children and much less money. Amy's childhood security was real, but it was brief. Perhaps that is one reason why, for the rest of her life, she poured so much of herself into giving security to children who had none.

The Sea

She never forgot the sea at Millisle. Many years later, in the hot plains of South India, she spent a short holiday by the sea with the young converts of her band, and in *Things as They Are* she described one of the boys standing on a rock in the surf, "the wind in his hair and his face wet with spray, rejoicing in it all." The joy she took in that picture is the joy of a child who had grown up beside the water. A grown woman who had spent her early years running on the shore of the Irish Sea knew exactly what that boy was feeling.

She also learned, by the sea, the feeling of smallness that it gives, and the sense of a God whose works are wonderful. The mountains of the Western Ghats, under which she spent most of her life, would give her something similar, and she loved them. But the first great things she knew were the sky and the sea of County Down.

What Was Given

It would be wrong to read too much of the later woman back into the little girl. Most of what is told of Amy Carmichael's childhood comes from her own memories, written or spoken long afterwards, when she knew how the story had turned out, and from relatives who told it in the light of what she became. Childhood memories are selected, and the ones we keep are the ones that fit.

But some things seem clear. She was born into a family of faith, and she never had to discover the Bible as a stranger. She was the eldest of a large family, used to leading and used to responsibility. She was strong-willed, imaginative, and quick to feel. She had been taught that God hears prayer, and she had learned, at a mirror one morning, that hearing is not the same as granting. And she had been formed, as the psalm says, by a God who did not make mistakes about the colour of a child's eyes.

Many years later, those who knew her at Dohnavur remembered her laughter as much as her seriousness. She liked fun, she liked games, and she liked to tease. The wilful girl from Millisle had not disappeared; she had been brought under a stronger will. The next step in that process would come at a boarding school in Yorkshire, when she was fifteen.

Harrogate

"Jehovah appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee."
— Jeremiah 31:3, ASV

A School in Yorkshire

In the early 1880s, when Amy was about twelve, her parents sent her across the sea to a girls' boarding school in Harrogate, in Yorkshire. Harrogate was a spa town, prosperous and respectable, full of hotels and pump rooms where the well-to-do came to drink the sulphurous waters. The school she attended was run on Methodist lines, which is a reminder that the Carmichaels, though Presbyterians, did not draw tight boundaries around their evangelical faith. What mattered to them was that their daughter would be well taught, and taught in a Christian setting.

It was a long way from Millisle. For a girl who loved the shore and the open air, the regulated life of a Victorian boarding school, with its bells, its walks in pairs and its rules, cannot have been easy. Amy was clever, but she was not a model pupil. The stories that survive from these years show her as she had been at home: high-spirited, inclined to lead, and impatient with rules she thought pointless.

The Comet

One story from Harrogate has been told so often that it has become part of the legend, and it is worth telling with a little caution. In the autumn of 1882 one of the brightest comets of the century, now known as the Great September Comet, was in the newspapers and could be seen in the early morning sky. The girls of the school wanted to see it, and they were forbidden to stay up. According to the story, which her biographers took from her own later recollection, Amy organised a party of girls to slip out of bed and watch for it at night, and when they were found out she was very nearly sent home in disgrace.

Whether every detail is accurate, the story fits everything else we know about her. She was not a girl who accepted limits easily, and she was a born organiser. Years later she would gather hundreds of children into a well-ordered community, and she would be the one setting the rules. Those who think of her only as the saintly invalid of her last years should remember the girl who wanted to see the comet.

A Children's Mission

The most important event of her schooldays came in 1883, when she was fifteen. A children's mission was held in Harrogate, of a kind that was then common in Britain. The Children's Special Service Mission had been founded in 1867, the year of Amy's birth, to hold meetings for children and young people, on beaches in the summer and in schools and halls through the year. Its speakers told Bible stories, taught simple choruses, and spoke plainly about the love of Christ and the need to respond to it.

The movement had begun in a small way. Its founder, Josiah Spiers, had started holding meetings for children in London, and soon afterwards he

gathered a crowd of children on a beach in North Wales by writing a text in the sand. The idea spread quickly, and by the 1880s the mission's workers were a familiar sight at the seaside in summer and in schools through the year. They were mostly lay people, many of them young, and they spoke to children as if what children thought and chose really mattered. That was less common in Victorian Britain than it should have been. To be addressed in that way, as someone capable of a real response to God, could be a powerful thing for a child.

Amy later said that it was at such a meeting that she put her trust in Christ for herself. The details of what was said have been retold in different ways, and some later accounts add a hymn or a particular moment of silence that cannot now be checked. What she remembered was the substance. She had known about Jesus all her life. She had prayed since she was a small child. But at fifteen, in a school far from home, she came to understand that the love of God was meant for her personally, and she received it.

It may seem strange to speak of conversion in a girl who had grown up in such a devout home, and some Christians would hesitate to use the word. But it was the language of her tradition, and she meant something real by it. There is a difference between living inside a faith and owning it. Many children of Christian homes cross that line so quietly that they cannot name the day. Others, like Amy, remember a time and a place. Neither way is better than the other. What matters is that the faith of the parents becomes the faith of the child.

An Everlasting Love

The verse at the head of this chapter comes from the prophet Jeremiah, speaking to a people in exile: "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love:

therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." It is a verse about the initiative of God. The love comes first, and it is everlasting, which means it was there before the people knew it. The drawing comes after, and it is done with kindness, not force.

That is a good description of what happened to Amy Carmichael at Harrogate. She did not discover a God who had been absent. She discovered that a God who had always been present had been drawing her all along. Her later writing is full of this sense of being drawn, of being wooed rather than driven. It was a long way from the hell-fire that frightened some Victorian children into faith. She would one day teach small Indian girls that Jesus loved them, and she would refuse to frighten them into believing it.

It is worth noticing, too, that this decisive moment came through a children's mission. Amy Carmichael never forgot that she had been reached as a child, by people who took children seriously enough to speak to them about God. When she later found herself responsible for hundreds of children, she did not treat them as too young for real faith. She believed that a child could know Christ, and she organised a whole community around that belief.

The End of School

Her time at Harrogate did not last much longer. The Carmichael business was in difficulty. The flour mills of the north of Ireland faced hard competition in the 1870s and 1880s, as cheap grain and flour came in from abroad and the old local mills struggled to keep up, and David Carmichael's fortunes declined. About 1883 the family moved to Belfast, and Amy was brought home from school. Accounts differ on the exact year, and on

whether the move came before or after the worst of the losses, but the direction is clear. The comfortable life of Millisle was ending.

In Belfast her father seems to have tried to make a new start, and for a time the family still lived in a respectable part of the city. But money was tighter than before, and the children who had been growing up as the sons and daughters of a prosperous miller were growing up instead as the children of a struggling one. For Amy, the eldest, that meant responsibility. She was expected to help her mother with the younger children, and she did.

A Girl of Her Time

It is easy to forget how limited the options were for a girl like Amy in the 1880s. A daughter of a middle-class Presbyterian family in Belfast was expected to help at home, to do charitable work, and in due course to marry. Higher education for women was only just beginning, and few women from her background went to university. A career outside the home was unusual and, for many families, faintly disreputable. Missionary service abroad was one of the very few ways in which a single woman could do serious work in the world, and even that was only beginning to open to women on their own.

Amy Carmichael did not yet know that she would be a missionary. She did not yet know what she would do at all. But she came home from Harrogate with two things that would shape the rest of her life. She had a personal faith, which she knew to be hers and not merely her parents'. And she had a strong will that was beginning to be brought under the control of something stronger than itself. The comet had shown the will; the children's mission had shown the faith. The next years in Belfast would show what happened when the two came together.

A Reflection

Christian biographies often hurry past their subjects' conversions, as if the important part were what they did afterwards. But for Amy Carmichael the moment at Harrogate was the root of everything. She was not, in later life, a woman who talked much about her own experiences. She preferred to point to Christ. But when she did look back, she saw her whole life as the story of being drawn, step by step, by a love that had been there before she knew it.

The verse from Jeremiah was spoken to Israel at a time of loss, when the nation had been carried into exile and the old securities were gone. It was not a promise that the losses would be undone. It was a promise that love would hold. Amy was about to lose a great deal: her father, her family's comfort, and much of the life she had expected. What she had gained at fifteen would have to carry her through it.

Gold, Silver, Costly Stones

"But if any man buildeth on the foundation gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble; each man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire; and the fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is."
— 1 Corinthians 3:12-13, ASV

Belfast

The Belfast to which the Carmichaels moved in the early 1880s was a city growing at astonishing speed. In the course of the nineteenth century it had changed from a modest port into one of the great industrial cities of the British Isles. Its linen mills were among the largest in the world. Its shipyards were beginning to build the great liners. Its population had multiplied many times over within living memory, and it was still climbing. Rows of narrow brick houses spread out from the mills along the Falls Road and the Shankill, and tens of thousands of women and girls walked to work each morning in the dark.

The Carmichaels did not live among them. They took a house in a respectable district, and they worshipped at Rosemary Street Presbyterian Church, one of the old congregations of the city centre. For a time, at least, life went on in much the way it had in Millisle. But the family business was failing, and the money that had once seemed secure was draining away.

Her Father's Death

In 1885 David Carmichael died. He was still in middle life, and his death was a shock to the whole family. Amy was seventeen. She was the eldest of seven children, and her mother was left with a large family, a failing business, and debts. The comfortable years were over.

We know less than we would like about Amy's grief. She did not write much about it, and her biographers have little to go on beyond the fact itself and its consequences. But it is clear that her father's death changed her position in the family. She became, in a real sense, her mother's partner, sharing the responsibility for the younger children and for the household. It was a role she seems to have taken on without complaint, and it prepared her, in ways she could not have foreseen, for the role she would one day take on at Dohnavur.

It is worth noting, too, that a long and painful illness entered her life at about this time. She began to suffer from neuralgia, a condition of the nerves that brought attacks of severe pain, sometimes lasting for days or weeks and leaving her exhausted and unable to work. It would trouble her for the rest of her life. In an age before modern painkillers, there was little that doctors could do for it. It would be the reason a mission board turned her down, and it would be her companion in every place she lived.

A Sunday Morning

The most famous story of Amy's Belfast years is one she told herself, long afterwards, as the moment when the direction of her life changed. It happened on a dull Sunday morning, as the family was walking home from church. Amy and two of her brothers saw an old woman, poor and ragged, struggling along the street with a heavy bundle. They turned and helped

her, taking her arms and carrying her load. It was not a dignified sight, and the respectable people who were coming out of church at the same time could see them. Amy later admitted that she felt hot with embarrassment.

As they passed a fountain in the street, words came into her mind with such force that she turned to see who had spoken them. They were the words of Paul from the third chapter of First Corinthians, in the Authorised Version she knew: "gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble." Every man's work, the passage goes on, shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it, and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. There was nobody there. The fountain splashed, the people walked on, and the boys and their sister went on with the old woman. But when she got home, Amy went to her room and stayed there for some time alone. She said later that she settled something with God that day.

The ASV, quoted at the head of this chapter, renders "precious stones" as "costly stones," but the meaning is the same. Paul is talking about the work that Christians build on the foundation of Christ. Some of it will last, and some of it will burn. The test is not how it looks to other people but how it stands in the fire of God's judgement. On that Sunday morning, a girl who had been embarrassed to be seen helping a poor woman in the street was suddenly confronted with the question of what she was building with her life. Respectability, she realised, was wood, hay and stubble. The love that bends down to carry an old woman's bundle was gold.

It is a story that has been told so often that it is easy to tidy it up. She did not become a different person overnight. She went on caring about what people thought of her, and she would struggle with pride for the rest of her life, as she freely admitted. But from that morning, as she told it, she knew where the line ran. She would rather be seen with the poor, and look foolish, than be admired and build with stubble.

The Glasgow Meeting

A second turning point came in 1886, when she was eighteen. She travelled to Glasgow to attend a convention for the deepening of spiritual life, of the kind that the Keswick Convention had made popular. These meetings, which had begun in the English Lake District in 1875, taught that Christians need not live in constant defeat by sin, and that by trusting Christ and yielding themselves entirely to him they could know a life of rest and victory. The teaching was sometimes called "the higher life" or "holiness," and it drew large crowds, especially among evangelical Anglicans, Presbyterians and Quakers.

The convention at Keswick itself had been founded by the vicar of St John's, Keswick, Canon Thomas Harford-Battersby, together with a Quaker businessman from the neighbouring countryside named Robert Wilson. Its motto was "All one in Christ Jesus," and it deliberately brought together Christians of different denominations under one tent each summer. Amy did not yet know Robert Wilson. Within a few years he would be the most important older friend of her life, and his house would be her home.

Amy had come with a sense of need. She was finding the Christian life a struggle. According to her own account, the speakers at the meeting did not help her much. What reached her, near the end, was a short prayer offered by the chairman, which drew on the closing words of the letter of Jude, where Christ is praised as the one who is able to keep his people from falling. In the ASV the verse reads, "Now unto him that is able to guard you from stumbling, and to set you before the presence of his glory without blemish in exceeding joy." She said afterwards that she went out of the hall with the knowledge that he was able to keep her, and that this was enough.

That conviction stayed at the centre of her faith. She was not a theologian, and she did not spend much time on the debates that the Keswick teaching provoked, about how complete the victory over sin could be in this life. What she took from it was simpler: that Christ himself was the keeper, and that the life of faith was a life of trusting him rather than straining after holiness in one's own strength. It was a teaching that would carry her through much that was to come.

A Life Begins to Turn

The two experiences, on the Belfast street and in the Glasgow hall, belong together. One was about service: what she would build. The other was about strength: how she would be kept. Together they gave her a direction and a source of power for it.

She began at once to look for ways to serve. She started meetings for the children of the neighbourhood, and she visited the poor. She joined in the work of the city mission. And she began to notice the girls who walked past her church every morning on their way to the mills, wrapped in shawls because they could not afford hats, and who never came inside. The next chapter tells what she did about them.

The Fire That Proves

Paul's image of the fire is a sobering one. It is not about salvation; he says plainly that the one whose work is burned up will be saved, "yet so as through fire." It is about the value of what we do with our lives. Much that looks impressive will not survive the test, and much that looks small will. An old woman's bundle, carried through the streets of Belfast on a wet Sunday, may outlast a great deal of religious activity.

Amy Carmichael spent the rest of her life measuring her work by that test. She was suspicious of statistics, of large claims, of success that could be photographed and reported. She cared about whether the work was real, whether the converts were true, and whether the children were loved. In the most famous passage of her later writing, she would ask herself again and again whether her love was the love of Calvary, and if not, what it was worth. That searching habit of mind began on the Sunday morning by the fountain, when a girl in her teens, embarrassed by the company she was keeping, heard Paul's words and knew that God was looking not at how her work appeared, but at what it was made of.

The Shawlies

"Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor and maimed and blind and lame."
— Luke 14:21, ASV

Girls in Shawls

In the Belfast of the 1880s, a woman's headgear told the world where she stood. A lady wore a hat or a bonnet. A servant wore a cap. A mill girl, who could afford neither, wrapped a shawl around her head and shoulders against the rain and walked to work like that. People called them "shawlies," and the word was not a compliment.

There were thousands of them. The linen industry of Belfast depended on women and girls, many of whom started work in their early teens, some as "half-timers" even younger. They worked long hours in the spinning rooms and weaving sheds, where the air was hot and wet to keep the flax supple, and where the noise of the machinery was deafening. Their wages were low. Their health suffered from the damp, the dust and the long hours on their feet. Many of them came from families that had moved to the city from the countryside in search of work, and many lived in crowded houses in the narrow streets near the mills.

Few of them went to church. The churches of Belfast were full on Sunday mornings, but they were full of people in hats. A girl in a shawl would have felt out of place in a respectable congregation, and many congregations would have made her feel it. The gulf between the churchgoing classes and the working poor was wide in every British city, and in Belfast it was sharpened by the divisions of class within each denomination.

The First Class

Amy Carmichael noticed them. Exactly how it began is not certain, but by the mid-1880s she was running a Sunday morning class for shawlies in a hall belonging to Rosemary Street Presbyterian Church. It was a bold thing to do. Some members of the congregation were not pleased to see their premises filled with mill girls, and the girls themselves were wary at first of a young lady from a good family who wanted to teach them the Bible.

But they came, and they kept coming. Amy was not much older than many of them, and she seems to have had a gift, from the start, for treating people as people rather than as objects of charity. She taught them the Bible, sang with them, and prayed with them. She also tried to help them in practical ways. The class grew until the hall was too small, and it went on growing.

It is worth asking why. Amy had no training as a teacher or an evangelist. She was shy in some ways, and she would never be a great public speaker. But she cared intensely about the girls in front of her, and they could tell. Years later, in India, people would notice the same thing: that she had a way of making each person feel that she or he mattered to her, and to God. It was not a technique. It was the fruit of the Sunday morning by the

fountain, when she had learned that an old woman's bundle was worth more than other people's good opinion.

A Hall for the Shawlies

As the class outgrew its room, Amy began to pray for a building of its own. The story of how the prayer was answered is one of the best known of her early life. She saw an advertisement in *The Christian*, a widely read evangelical weekly, for a building made of corrugated iron that could be put up to hold about five hundred people, at a cost of five hundred pounds. Iron halls of this kind, sometimes called tin tabernacles, were common at the time; they were cheap and quick to erect, and many mission congregations began in them.

Five hundred pounds was a very large sum, far beyond anything the Carmichael family could now afford. But, according to the account handed down, a Christian woman named Kate Mitchell heard of the need and gave the whole amount, and a mill owner gave a piece of land on which to put it, at the corner of Cambrai Street and Heather Street, off the Shankill Road. The hall was built, and it was named the Welcome. Sources differ on when it opened: some give 1887, and others say that it was opened at the beginning of 1889. The later date seems more likely to be the date of the formal opening, though the work had begun some years before.

The name said everything. This was to be a place where the shawlies would be welcome, not tolerated. Amy was firm about who it was for. It was not to become another middle-class mission hall, filled with the respectable poor and the comfortable rich. It was for the girls from the mills.

The Work Grows

At the Welcome Hall the work spread out in many directions. There were Bible classes and Sunday meetings, and, by the accounts that survive, gatherings during the week as well, meant to meet the girls where they were and not only on Sundays. Amy was not the only worker; others joined her, and she seems to have been as good at drawing in helpers as at drawing in the girls. But she was the centre of it, and she poured herself into it.

The hall outlived her by a long time. It still stands in Belfast, now as Welcome Evangelical Church, and a centre in her name tells her story to visitors. It is a modest monument. But there is something fitting about it. The first permanent fruit of Amy Carmichael's ministry was a corrugated iron hall built for girls who were too poor to wear hats.

What She Learned

The Welcome Hall years taught Amy Carmichael things she would use for the rest of her life. She learned that the gospel was for the poor, and that the poor would come if they were truly welcomed. She learned that faith and practical care belonged together. She learned to organise, to lead others, and to keep a work going week after week. And she learned, perhaps for the first time, the pattern of prayer and provision that would mark her whole life. She had prayed for a hall, she had not asked anyone for money, and the money had come.

That last point needs to be handled carefully. Amy Carmichael came to believe very firmly that the needs of God's work should be made known to God in prayer, and not to people by appeals. She learned this partly from the example of George Müller of Bristol, who had run orphan houses for thousands of children on that principle, and from Hudson Taylor and the

China Inland Mission. In later years Dohnavur would never make appeals for money, and she would point to its survival as evidence that God answers prayer. But it is worth remembering that the Welcome Hall was paid for by a wealthy woman who heard about it, and that the principle of not asking did not mean that nobody knew. Christians who share her convictions have sometimes been accused of asking by not asking, by telling stories of need in a way that invites a response. Amy was aware of the danger, and she tried hard to avoid it. Whether she always succeeded is a fair question, and one she would have asked herself.

The Feast in the Parable

The verse at the head of this chapter comes from a parable of Jesus about a great supper. The invited guests made excuses and did not come, and the master of the house, angry at their refusal, sent his servant out into the streets and lanes of the city to bring in the poor, the maimed, the blind and the lame. When there was still room, he sent him out again, to the highways and hedges, to compel people to come in, so that his house would be filled.

It is a parable about the generosity of God and about the strange guest list of his kingdom. The respectable, who had every reason to come, stayed away. The poor, who had no claim on the master at all, were brought in. The servant's job was simply to go out and bring them.

The young woman who built a hall for the shawlies of Belfast had understood that parable. She did not wait for the mill girls to find their way into the churches. She went out to them, and she made a place for them. It would not be the last time. In India, she would go out to the villages, and later she would make a place for children who had nowhere else to go. The Welcome Hall was the first of her houses of welcome. It was not the last.

A Call Beyond Belfast

By 1889 the Welcome Hall was well established, and Amy might have spent her life there. Many women of her background did spend their lives in exactly this kind of work, running mission halls and Bible classes in their home cities, and it was valuable and honourable work. But the Carmichael family's circumstances were changing again. Their financial troubles had not ended with her father's death, and in 1889 the family left Belfast. Amy and her mother went to Manchester, where a new opening for mission work among mill girls had been offered to them. She handed over the Welcome Hall to others. She was twenty-one, and she was about to discover that the work she loved could be taken from her as suddenly as it had been given.

The Dear Old Man

"God setteth the solitary in families: He bringeth out the prisoners into prosperity; But the rebellious dwell in a parched land."
— Psalm 68:6, ASV

Manchester

In 1889 Amy Carmichael and her mother moved to Manchester. The rest of the family was scattering. The Carmichael fortunes had not recovered, and the younger children were making their own way; in time several of them would emigrate and make their lives overseas. For Amy and her mother, Manchester offered a fresh start and a new field of work. They had been invited to help in a mission among the mill workers of the city, and Amy threw herself into it with all the energy she had brought to the Welcome Hall.

Manchester was the first industrial city of the world. Its cotton mills had made it rich and famous, and they had also made parts of it among the most wretched places in Britain. Ancoats, the district where the earliest great mills had been built, was a byword for overcrowding, dirt and poverty. Its streets were narrow and dark, its houses damp, its air thick with smoke. Mill girls lived there in great numbers, and so did the poorest of the city's poor.

Amy chose to live among them. She took a room in the district, in a house that, by the accounts that survive, was dirty and infested with vermin, so that she would be near the people she wanted to reach. It was an unusual thing for a young woman of her background to do, and it showed the same instinct that would later lead her to wear Indian dress and live in an Indian village. She wanted to be among people, not above them.

Breakdown

The work in Manchester did not last long. Amy's health, already uncertain, could not stand the strain. The neuralgia that had troubled her in Belfast grew worse, and the long hours, the poor food, and the foul air of Ancoats wore her down. Within months she was exhausted and ill, and she had to stop.

It was a bitter experience. She had given up the Welcome Hall to come to Manchester, and now she could not do the work she had come for. She had to accept that there were limits to what her body could bear, and that zeal alone would not carry her. It was the first of many such lessons. Again and again in her life, illness would stop her, or slow her, or send her somewhere she had not planned to go. She never found it easy to accept, but she came to believe that God used it.

Robert Wilson

It was at this low point that an old friend stepped in. Robert Wilson was a Quaker, a Cumberland businessman, and one of the founders of the Keswick Convention. He was a much older man, a widower who, by the usual account, had lost both his wife and his only daughter, and he lived at Broughton Grange, a country house near Cockermouth, with his grown

sons. Amy had met him through the convention movement, probably in 1887, and he had taken a warm interest in her. Now, seeing her worn out by the work in Manchester, he invited her to come and stay at Broughton Grange.

She went in 1890, and she stayed. What began as a convalescence became a new life. Robert Wilson came to treat her as a daughter, and she came to treat him as a father. She called him by an affectionate nickname, "the Dear Old Man," and in her letters often simply "D.O.M." In time she began to use his name alongside her own, and her early books were published under the name Amy Wilson-Carmichael. She was never legally adopted, but the relationship was, for both of them, real and deep.

Her mother agreed to the arrangement, and that too was an act of generosity. Catherine Carmichael was a widow, and Amy was her eldest daughter. To let her go to another household was to give something up. But she seems to have seen that her daughter needed rest, and that Robert Wilson needed companionship, and that the arrangement might serve them both. It was not the last time that she would let Amy go.

A School of Another Kind

Broughton Grange was a school for Amy in a way that Harrogate had never been. Robert Wilson was at the heart of the Keswick movement, and through him she met many of the leading evangelical figures of the day. Missionaries on furlough, speakers at the convention, and leaders of mission societies came and went at the house. She heard their stories, listened to their discussions, and saw the needs of the world through their eyes. Among them, she would later meet or hear Hudson Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission, whose appeal for workers had already stirred her at Keswick in 1887.

She also absorbed something of the Quaker spirit of her adopted father. Robert Wilson was a man of quiet, practical faith, and he valued silence and waiting on God. The Keswick Convention he had helped to found was deliberately interdenominational; its motto was "All one in Christ Jesus." Amy, the Presbyterian girl who had been schooled among Methodists and who would later work with Anglicans, took that spirit to heart. Dohnavur would never belong to a single denomination, and she would insist that its members be united by their love for Christ rather than by their church labels.

At Broughton Grange she learned, too, the practical business of running a large household. She helped Robert Wilson with his correspondence, acted as his companion, and in many ways ran his home. It was experience that she would draw on later, when she found herself at the head of a household of hundreds.

A Missionary Age

The years Amy spent at Broughton Grange were years of extraordinary missionary enthusiasm in the English-speaking churches. In 1885 seven young men from Cambridge, among them a famous cricketer, had sailed for China with Hudson Taylor's mission, and their story had been told in every evangelical newspaper. In America, the Student Volunteer Movement had taken as its watchword "the evangelization of the world in this generation," and thousands of students were signing pledges to go overseas. Women were beginning to go out in large numbers, not only as missionaries' wives but as missionaries in their own right, to teach, to nurse, and to visit women in their homes where no man could go.

The Keswick Convention was caught up in this movement and helped to drive it. Its teaching on surrender, on giving the whole of oneself to

Christ, led naturally to the question of where Christ wanted that self to be given. Speakers at the convention appealed for missionaries, and the convention began to consider whether it should send missionaries of its own. By the late 1880s missionary meetings had become part of the convention week, and before long it would form a committee to send missionaries of its own. Robert Wilson was at the centre of these discussions, and Amy, living in his house, heard them all.

She was not yet thinking of going herself. Her health was poor, and she had a home and a duty at Broughton Grange. But the air she breathed there was full of the needs of the world, and of the conviction that those needs were a summons to every Christian who heard of them. Sooner or later, the question would become personal.

Set in a Family

The verse at the head of this chapter says that "God setteth the solitary in families." It is a verse about the care of God for those who are alone: the orphan, the widow, the stranger, the prisoner. Amy Carmichael was not exactly solitary in 1890. She had a mother and brothers and sisters who loved her. But her father was dead, her family was scattering, her health had broken, and her work had been taken from her. In Robert Wilson's house, God gave her a new family at the moment she needed it.

She would spend much of her life doing the same for others. At Dohnavur she would gather children who had no family at all, or whose families could not or would not keep them, and make them into a family. She insisted that it was a family, not an institution. The children were not inmates or cases; they were sons and daughters, brothers and sisters. She was their Amma. It is not too much to say that she was passing on what she

had received at Broughton Grange, where an old man had taken in a worn-out young woman and made her his daughter.

The Shadow of a Question

There is one more thing to say about the Broughton Grange years, and it would come to matter a great deal. Robert Wilson came to depend on Amy, and he hoped that she would stay with him. He was growing old, and she had become the light of his home. When, two years later, she believed that God was calling her to go overseas, she faced a painful choice between the call and the man who had been a father to her.

Some of those around them thought she should stay. Robert Wilson needed her; she had a duty to him; there were plenty of people who could go to the mission field, but only one who could care for him. It was a reasonable argument, and Amy felt its force. The next chapter tells how she resolved it, and what it cost her and him. But it is worth noticing that the question arose because the relationship was so real. Amy Carmichael was not a woman who sat lightly to human love. She loved deeply, and she would have to learn, again and again, what it meant to put Christ first without loving others less.

For now, in 1890 and 1891, she was at peace. She had a home, a father, and work to do, and she was recovering her strength. She was also listening, though she did not yet know for what.

"Go Ye"

"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation."
— Mark 16:15, ASV

13 January 1892

Amy Carmichael remembered the date for the rest of her life. On 13 January 1892, a winter evening at Broughton Grange, she was alone in her room when, as she later described it, the words "Go ye" came to her with a clarity and authority that she could not mistake. She had heard the great commission read and preached all her life. She had heard missionary speakers at Keswick and in Robert Wilson's drawing room. She had read reports from China and India and Africa. But this time, she said, the words were addressed to her.

It is worth being careful about what this means. Amy Carmichael was not given to claiming visions or voices, and she was suspicious of Christians who were. She did not say that she heard an audible voice. She said that a familiar command of Christ became, on a particular evening, a personal command, impossible to evade. Many Christians have known something similar: a verse read a hundred times that suddenly becomes alive, and will not let go. For Amy, it was the words of the risen Jesus at the end of Mark's

Gospel: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation."

A Letter to Her Mother

The next day she wrote to her mother. It must have been one of the hardest letters she ever wrote. Her mother was a widow, living with reduced means, and Amy was her eldest daughter. Her father's death had made the family depend on one another, and Amy had been her mother's right hand. Now she was asking her mother's blessing to go to the other side of the world, quite possibly never to return.

Catherine Carmichael's reply has been preserved, and the biographies print it. It is a remarkable letter, from a woman who had already lost a great deal. She did not try to hold her daughter back, and she did not lay her own needs before her. She gave her daughter up to God, freely and with thanksgiving. Amy kept the letter for the rest of her life.

The willingness of Christian parents to let their children go has always been one of the hidden costs of missionary work. The missionary gets the stories and the honour; the parents get the empty chair and the long silences between letters. Catherine Carmichael would die in England in 1913, and the daughter she had given up would not be with her. Her letter of 1892 was an act of faith as costly as anything her daughter did.

The Dear Old Man's Grief

Robert Wilson found the news harder to bear. He had come to depend on Amy, and he loved her as a daughter. He was growing old, and her going would leave his house empty again. There were friends who told Amy plainly that her duty lay at Broughton Grange, and that it was wrong to

leave an old man who needed her. Some of them thought she was being selfish, dressing up a desire for adventure in the language of a divine call.

Amy felt the force of these arguments. She did not leave lightly, and she suffered over the decision. But she was convinced that the call was real, and that to refuse it would be disobedience. In the end, Robert Wilson himself gave his consent, though it cost him a great deal to do so. He would continue to support her, write to her, and pray for her for the rest of his life, and she would continue to call him her father.

It is easy to tell such stories as if the right choice were obvious. It was not. Jesus himself spoke of the duty to care for parents, and condemned those who used religious language to evade it. Amy Carmichael was choosing between two goods, and she knew it. That she chose to go does not mean that those who urged her to stay were wrong to care about the old man. It means that she was convinced, after much prayer, that God was asking her to go, and that he would care for Robert Wilson in her absence. Whether she was right is a question that only faith can answer. She believed she was, and the rest of her life was the evidence she offered.

The China Inland Mission

Her first thought was of China. She had heard Hudson Taylor speak, and she had been moved by his appeals for workers for the vast interior of China, where there were millions who had never heard the gospel. The China Inland Mission was the kind of mission that appealed to her. It accepted workers from different denominations, it made no appeals for money, it asked its missionaries to wear Chinese dress and live as close to the people as possible, and it expected them to trust God for their needs. Everything about it matched her convictions.

In 1892 she applied to the mission and went to London to its training home for women candidates. There she shared in the life of the house, studied, and prepared to sail. But the mission required its candidates to pass a medical examination, and Amy did not pass. The doctors judged that her health, and above all the neuralgia that so often laid her low, made her unfit for the rigours of life in inland China. The door was closed.

It was a severe disappointment. She had been certain of the call, and now the very mission whose principles she most admired had turned her down. She went back to Broughton Grange, uncertain of what to do next. It must have seemed to some of her friends that the matter had been settled: she was not strong enough, and she should stay at home. But she did not believe the call had been withdrawn. She believed only that one door had shut.

The Keswick Missionary

The next door opened from an unexpected direction. The Keswick Convention had been discussing for some time whether it should support missionaries of its own, and it now formed a committee to do so. Amy Carmichael became the first missionary it sent out. Arrangements were made for her to join the work of Barclay Buxton, an Anglican missionary of the Church Missionary Society who was leading an evangelistic work in western Japan, around the town of Matsue. Buxton was himself a Keswick man, and the connection was natural.

It was, in some ways, an odd arrangement. Amy was not a member of the Church Missionary Society, and she was not formally attached to any mission board. She was going out on the support of a convention, to work alongside a mission whose structures she did not belong to. Her health had just been judged unequal to missionary life by one of the most experienced

missions in the world. Some observers must have thought it unwise. But she was sure that she was meant to go, and those who sent her shared her confidence.

She sailed for the East in March 1893, travelling with a small party of women missionaries bound for China. She was twenty-five. She had never been further from home than England, and she had no training in languages or in cross-cultural work. What she had was a conviction that she had been sent, a faith that had been tested by loss and illness, and a capacity for love that had already been proved among the shawlies of Belfast and the mill girls of Manchester.

Single Women Abroad

It is easy now to forget how new it was for a single woman to go overseas as a missionary in her own right. For most of the nineteenth century the Protestant missionary was a man, often accompanied by a wife who worked as hard as he did but whose work was rarely recognised. Single women began to go out in significant numbers only from the 1860s onward, and at first they went mostly to teach in schools or to visit women in their homes, the so-called zenana work, in societies where a male missionary could not enter the women's quarters of a house. Societies were formed especially for this purpose, among them the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, founded in 1880, which Amy Carmichael would one day join.

By the 1890s the numbers were growing rapidly, and in some missions single women outnumbered the men. But their position was still uncertain. They were often paid less than men, they were usually excluded from the councils that made decisions, and they were expected to defer to the senior male missionaries of their stations. Many of them found ways to do remarkable work within these limits, and a few, like Mary Slessor in

Calabar, found ways to step outside them. Amy Carmichael would prove to be one of the few. But in March 1893 she was simply a young woman of uncertain health, going out under an unusual arrangement to a country whose language she did not know.

Go Ye

The great commission at the end of Mark's Gospel is addressed to the eleven disciples, but Christians have always heard it as addressed to the whole church. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation." It is not a command to be successful. It is a command to go, and to tell.

Amy Carmichael would later write, in *Things as They Are*, of the long days of village work in which nothing seemed to happen, and she would hold on to that commission as the reason for going on. "He said 'Go, tell,'" she wrote, "and we have come and are telling, and we meet Him as we 'go and tell.'" The last part of that sentence is the key to her whole life. She did not go out of a sense of duty only, though duty mattered to her. She went because she believed that the one who sent her would be found on the road. She had found him on a winter evening at Broughton Grange, and she would look for him in Japan, in India, and in every village and nursery she ever entered.

Sunrise Land

"From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same Jehovah's name is to be praised."
— Psalm 113:3, ASV

Matsue

Amy Carmichael reached Japan in the spring of 1893, after a voyage by way of Shanghai. Japan was then a country in the middle of headlong change. Only forty years earlier it had been closed to the outside world. Now, under the Meiji government, it was building railways and factories, writing a constitution, and sending its young men abroad to study. Christian missionaries had been allowed to work openly for about two decades, and the churches were small but growing. In the larger cities there were mission schools and congregations, but in the countryside, especially on the western side of the main island, the gospel was still almost unknown.

The Christian story in Japan was older than the Meiji era, and darker. Roman Catholic missionaries had arrived in the sixteenth century, and for a time hundreds of thousands of Japanese had become Christians. Then, in the early seventeenth century, the faith was banned, and it was hunted down with great cruelty for more than two hundred years. Believers were tortured and killed; suspected Christians were made to tread on images of Christ and Mary to prove that they had renounced him. Some

communities kept their faith in secret, handing it down through generations without priests or Scriptures. Public notice boards forbidding Christianity were taken down only in 1873, twenty years before Amy arrived. When she spoke of Christ in a Japanese home, she was speaking of a name that many older people had been taught from childhood to fear.

Barclay Buxton had gone to that western coast a few years before. He was a member of a well-known English evangelical family, an Anglican clergyman of independent means, and a man shaped, like Amy, by the Keswick movement. He had settled in Matsue, an old castle town on the shore of a lake in the province of Izumo, and had gathered a band of Japanese and English workers who travelled through the towns and villages of the region preaching the gospel. It was to this band that Amy came.

The work suited her temperament. It was evangelistic, it was carried out in teams, it involved travelling to places where the gospel had not been heard, and it depended on prayer. Buxton believed, as she did, in a close partnership with the Japanese believers, and much of the most effective work was done by Japanese Christians. Amy herself could not speak the language, and she depended on Japanese fellow workers to interpret for her, among them a young Christian woman whom she called Misaki San. With them she visited homes, held meetings for women, and travelled into the countryside. It was humbling work for someone who wanted to speak for herself, and it taught her how much the gospel in any country depends on its own people.

Letters from Sunrise Land

We know a good deal about Amy's months in Japan because she wrote long letters home, which were later collected and published in 1895 as *From Sunrise Land*, her first book. The letters are lively, observant and often

funny. They describe journeys by kuruma, the Japanese rickshaw, meetings with women and enquirers, and the strangeness and beauty of the country. They also show a young missionary learning hard lessons about herself.

The best-known of those lessons, as she told it later, came on a visit to an old woman who was ill and who seemed to be on the point of believing. Amy had gone in her ordinary English clothes, which included a pair of fur-lined gloves against the cold. As she spoke, she noticed the old woman's attention wandering to the gloves. The moment passed, and the woman did not respond. Amy went home convinced that her foreign clothes had come between the woman and the gospel, and she resolved from then on to wear Japanese dress. Whatever the exact details, the lesson stayed with her. In India she would wear a sari, and she would ask the members of her Fellowship to dress as the people around them did. She did not believe that clothes could save anyone. But she believed that they could get in the way.

Learning the Hard Way

Not everything went well. Japanese is a difficult language, and Amy made slow progress. Working through an interpreter was frustrating, and she felt keenly her inability to speak directly to the people she wanted to reach. The climate did not suit her. The damp cold of the Japanese winter and the humid heat of summer brought on her neuralgia, which she began to call her "Japanese head." There were weeks when she could do nothing at all.

There were also spiritual struggles. Amy came to Japan with high expectations, shaped by the Keswick teaching on faith and victory. She prayed for definite results, and sometimes she saw them. But she also saw much that discouraged her: people who listened politely and went away unchanged, enquirers who drew back, and the slowness of the work. She learned, as every missionary learns, that the field is not the platform, and

that the stories told at conventions are only part of the truth. It was a lesson she would later put into a whole book.

The Cave

One of the most important moments of her time in Japan was not about the work at all. Many years later, she told a younger colleague about a day when she had gone alone to a cave in the hills to pray. She was troubled by the prospect of a life alone. She was in her twenties; she had chosen a path that would very probably mean she would never marry; and she was afraid of the loneliness of the years ahead. In the cave, she said, she brought the fear to God, and she received an assurance from the words of a psalm, which she knew in the Authorised Version: "none of them that trust in him shall be desolate."

The verse is the last line of Psalm 34. In the American Standard Version it reads a little differently: "none of them that take refuge in him shall be condemned." The two translations bring out different sides of the Hebrew word, which carries the sense of being held guilty and also of being left desolate and bereft. Amy took from it the promise that she would not be left alone. She did not say that she was never lonely afterwards; she was, often. But she said that the promise held, and that she never again doubted that God would be enough for her.

The story is told only in her later recollection, and like many such memories it may have been shaped by the years. But it rings true to the rest of her life. She never married. She formed deep friendships, and she gathered a family of hundreds, but she lived without the companionship of a husband, and she knew what that meant. Her writing about singleness, in later years, was neither sentimental nor bitter. It was the writing of

someone who had faced the question squarely in a cave in Japan, and found an answer she could live with.

Fifteen Months

Amy Carmichael stayed in Japan for about fifteen months. By the summer of 1894 her health had broken down badly, and she was exhausted. She decided that she must leave, at least for a time. She went first to Shanghai, and then, believing that she was being guided, on to Ceylon. The decision was made quickly, and she did not consult the committee that had sent her before making it. Some of those at home were dismayed. To them it looked as if the Keswick missionary had simply left her post.

It is fair to ask what Japan had amounted to. In terms of visible results, not very much: some meetings, some conversations, a small number of people who professed faith, and a book of letters. She herself seems to have felt that she had failed. But Japan had taught her lessons she would use for the rest of her life: about dress and identification, about the slowness of real work, about the importance of indigenous workers, and about loneliness and the faithfulness of God. Barclay Buxton's band was also an early model of the kind of community she would later build: a group of men and women, foreign and local, living simply and working together in prayer.

From the Rising of the Sun

The psalm at the head of this chapter speaks of the name of God being praised from the rising of the sun to its going down. Japan, the land of the rising sun, was the first place where Amy Carmichael saw that promise begin to come true in a place far from her own. She saw Japanese men and women turn to Christ and become fellow workers. She saw that the gospel

was not English, or Irish, or Western, but belonged to every people under the sun.

She would spend most of her life in India, and her months in Japan are often passed over quickly in her story. But they were the first test of her call, and in some ways the hardest. She went out with no experience, no language, and poor health, under an arrangement that some thought unwise, and she came away ill and uncertain. Yet she did not doubt that she had been sent, or that she would be sent again. The next stage of the journey would be short, and it would end, unexpectedly, back in England.

A Door Shut, a Door Opened

"Trust in Jehovah with all thy heart, And lean not upon thine own understanding: In all thy ways acknowledge him, And he will direct thy paths."
— Proverbs 3:5-6, ASV

Ceylon

Amy Carmichael arrived in Ceylon, now Sri Lanka, in the late summer of 1894. She was ill, tired, and uncertain of her future, and she had come without the approval of the committee that had sent her to Japan. To some of her friends at home it looked like a mistake: a young woman acting on impulse, mistaking her own restlessness for the leading of God. She herself believed that she had been guided, and that she was meant to be in Ceylon, at least for a time.

Her stay there was short, and we know comparatively little about it. She was received by Christian friends, she recovered some of her strength, and she took part in evangelistic work, speaking at meetings and visiting homes. The island was warm, green and beautiful, and its people, Sinhalese and Tamil, were of many faiths: Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims and Christians. For the first time, she was among Tamil-speaking people, though she could not yet have known that Tamil would become the language of her life.

It is tempting to see the Ceylon months as a bridge to India, and in a sense they were. But at the time they must have felt more like a pause, or a detour. She did not know where she was going. She had left Japan, she had not been accepted by any mission board, and her health was as poor as ever. If she had a plan, it was simply to obey day by day and wait for the next step to become clear.

News from Broughton Grange

The next step came in a form she did not expect. Late in 1894 news reached her that Robert Wilson had suffered a stroke. He was an old man, and it seemed possible that he would not recover. Amy did not hesitate. She left Ceylon at once and sailed for England, arriving home towards the end of the year.

Robert Wilson recovered, at least in part, and lived for another ten years. Amy stayed with him at Broughton Grange through his convalescence, and for some months it seemed that her missionary career might be over. She had gone out to Japan and come back ill; she had gone to Ceylon and come back to nurse an invalid. Some of those who had criticised her for leaving him in the first place must have felt that events had proved them right.

But she did not believe that the call had been withdrawn. She had been told to go, and she had gone; that she had come back did not mean that she was meant to stay. She waited, and she prayed, and she watched for a door to open.

The Zenana Society

The door that opened in 1895 was the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society. It had been founded in 1880 to send women missionaries to work among women in India and China, especially in the zenanas, the secluded women's quarters of high-caste homes, where no male missionary could go. It was an Anglican society, and Amy was not an Anglican, but its leaders knew of her through the Keswick connection, and they were willing to accept her.

The question of health came up again. On medical advice it was agreed that if she were to go to India at all, she should go to Bangalore, in the south, where the climate on the high plateau was cooler and healthier than on the plains. It was a sensible precaution, and Amy accepted it. She was to go to Bangalore, learn the language, and see whether her health would bear the strain. Nobody, least of all Amy herself, knew that she was going to India for good.

Robert Wilson gave his consent again. It must have been even harder the second time. He was older and weaker, and he knew now what it meant to lose her. But he let her go, and he continued to support her with his letters and his prayers until his death in 1905.

Sailing for India

In October 1895 Amy Carmichael sailed for India. She was twenty-seven. She arrived at Madras, on the south-east coast, in November, and travelled inland to Bangalore. She did not know it, but she would never see Britain again. She would spend the remaining fifty-five years of her life in India, and she would never take a furlough. In an age when missionaries normally

went home every few years to rest, to report and to raise support, her staying would become one of the things she was known for.

It was not, at first, a deliberate decision. She did not sail in 1895 with a vow never to return. The decision grew out of circumstances: the work she found herself doing, the children who came to depend on her, the dangers that would face them if she left, and her own conviction that she was needed where she was. In later years it hardened into a principle, and she encouraged the members of her Fellowship to think carefully before going home. But in 1895 she was simply a young missionary of uncertain health, going out on trial, to a station she had not chosen, for a society she did not belong to by tradition.

India in 1895

The India to which she sailed was ruled by the British Crown, which had taken over the government of the country from the East India Company after the great rising of 1857. The south of the peninsula was governed from Madras as the Madras Presidency, alongside a number of princely states whose rulers kept a measure of independence under British oversight. British rule was at its height, and to most Britons it seemed permanent. But the Indian National Congress had been founded ten years earlier, Indian newspapers were debating self-government, and educated Indians were asking hard questions about the foreign power that ruled them and the foreign religion that so many of its people professed.

Hinduism itself was in a period of ferment. Reformers were challenging child marriage, the treatment of widows and the rigidities of caste, while others were defending the old ways with new confidence against both the reformers and the missionaries. Christianity was, in most of India, the faith of a small minority. In a few places, however, it had taken root in whole

communities, and one of those places was the Tinnevelly district in the far south, where Amy Carmichael would spend almost all of her life. She knew none of this in detail when she landed. She would learn it slowly, and partly by painful experience.

Guidance and Its Mysteries

The story of Amy Carmichael's path from Broughton Grange to Bangalore raises questions about guidance that Christians have always found difficult. She believed she was called to China, and China would not have her. She went to Japan, and her health broke down. She went to Ceylon, believing herself guided, and was called home within months. She went to India because a doctor thought the climate would suit her. If one were to tell the story only by its outward events, it would look like a series of false starts.

She did not see it that way. She saw it as a path along which God had been leading her, step by step, even when she could not see where it went. The verse at the head of this chapter says, "Trust in Jehovah with all thy heart, And lean not upon thine own understanding: In all thy ways acknowledge him, And he will direct thy paths." It does not say that the path will be straight, or that its turnings will make sense at the time. It says that God will direct it.

That is a hard kind of faith. It is easy to say afterwards that the false starts were part of the plan. It is much harder to go on trusting while the path is winding and the destination is unclear. Amy Carmichael was not always sure, in 1894 and 1895, that she was doing the right thing. She was criticised, and she sometimes doubted herself. But she kept acknowledging God in the decisions she made, and she kept moving when the next step became clear. In later years she would often counsel others not to try to see the whole road, but to take the next step in obedience.

It is worth adding a word of caution. Not every winding path ends well, and not every sense of guidance is reliable. Amy's decision to leave Japan without consulting those who had sent her was, in the view of some who loved her, not well handled, and the criticism she received was not all unfair. Faith in God's guidance does not excuse us from the ordinary duties of consultation and accountability. Amy learned that too, in time, though she never found it easy to submit her own sense of God's will to the judgement of others.

What She Carried

When Amy Carmichael landed at Madras in November 1895, she carried with her more than she knew. She carried the faith of her parents and the conversion of Harrogate, the lesson of the fountain and the assurance of Glasgow. She carried the experience of the Welcome Hall and the hard lesson of Manchester. She carried the interdenominational spirit of Keswick and the quiet faith of Robert Wilson. She carried the lessons of Japan about dress and identification, and the promise received in a cave that she would not be left desolate. And she carried her neuralgia, which went with her everywhere.

She did not carry a plan. She did not know about the temple children, or Dohnavur, or the family she would gather. She knew only that she had been sent, and that she was going. The rest, as she would have said, was in other hands.

Bangalore

"And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God."
— Romans 12:2, ASV

The Garden City

Bangalore in 1895 was a pleasant place for a European to live. It stood on the Deccan plateau about three thousand feet above the sea, and its climate was mild compared with the burning plains around it. The British had built a large military cantonment there, with wide roads, gardens, churches, clubs and bungalows, and the town was popular with officers, officials and their families. It was also a centre of missionary work, with schools, churches and mission houses belonging to several societies.

It was to this place that Amy Carmichael came at the end of 1895, to learn Tamil and to see whether her health would bear life in India. She was soon ill. Within a short time of arriving she was struck down by fever, and for weeks she was too weak to study or work. It was not an encouraging start, and it confirmed the fears of those who had doubted whether she should have come at all.

A Disappointment

When she recovered, she found herself disturbed by something more troubling than illness. She had come to India expecting to find missionaries who were wholly given to their work, living simply among the people and burning with zeal for the gospel. What she found in Bangalore, as she saw it, was something else. Many of the missionaries lived much as other Europeans did. They had large houses and servants, they kept up English social customs, they spent time on tennis and calls and the round of station life, and they kept themselves socially apart from the Indian people among whom they worked. Some of them, she felt, had lost the fire that had brought them out.

She was young, and she was not always fair. It is easy for a newcomer to judge those who have spent years in a hard climate and have learned, sometimes through painful experience, what they need to survive. Rest and recreation were not luxuries for missionaries in India; many of them died young or broke down because they did not take enough. The social life of a station was also, for many, the only support they had. Amy would later learn to be more understanding of the weaknesses of fellow workers, though she never lost her dislike of what she saw as worldliness in missionary life.

But her unease was not simply youthful censoriousness. It grew from a real conviction, which she would hold all her life, that the gospel could not be credibly preached by people who lived as if the world were their home. She wrote later, in *Things as They Are*, about the gulf between the missionary and the people. "We are still up above to them; not on a level, not one of themselves," she wrote. She admired those who had tried to close the gap, and she knew that it could never be closed completely. "No matter how far you may go," she wrote, "there is always a distance you

cannot cover—yards or inches it may be, but always that fatal hiatus." The question of how near she could get would occupy her for years.

A Question About Converts

There was another thing that troubled her in Bangalore. She met Indian Christians, many of whom had been Christians for generations, and she found that their faith did not always look like the faith she had known in Belfast and at Keswick. Some seemed to her to be Christians in name only. The missionaries around her, she felt, too readily counted church members as converts, and too rarely asked whether lives had really been changed.

This too was a judgement she would later have to soften and refine. Indian Christianity, like Christianity everywhere, included the earnest and the nominal, and the missionary societies knew it as well as she did. Eugene Stock, the historian of the Church Missionary Society, said as much in the preface he wrote for her first book about India in 1903: "Hereditary Christianity in India is much like hereditary Christianity at home." But Amy's concern was not wrong. She wanted to see real conversion, and she distrusted anything that looked like religious statistics without spiritual reality. That concern would shape the way she worked in the villages, and later the way she received children and workers at Dohnavur.

Tamil

Meanwhile she was learning Tamil. It is one of the great classical languages of the world, with a literature that goes back two thousand years, and it is notoriously difficult for English speakers. It has sounds that do not exist in English, a grammar built on very different principles, and a written form with its own script. It also has a gulf between the literary language and the

spoken language of ordinary people, so that a learner must master two registers at once.

Amy found it hard. She was not a natural linguist, and her illnesses interrupted her studies. But she was determined, and she had a great motive: she wanted to speak to people directly, without the interpreter she had depended on in Japan. Over the following years she became fluent, and she came to love the language. She wrote Tamil hymns and poems, gave Tamil names to the children of Dohnavur, and in her English books she often translated Tamil words and proverbs for her readers. One of them stands at the end of the note she wrote for a later edition of *Things as They Are*: "to the Mighty One," as the Tamil proverb says, "even the blade of grass is a weapon."

With the language came names. In the villages she would be called the Missie Ammal, a mixture of English and Tamil meaning something like "the missionary lady," and the glossary she later printed for English readers explained that *Amma*, "Mother," was used by all women speaking to one another and by girls speaking to women. It was an ordinary word of courtesy. Within a few years it would become, for hundreds of children, the only name they had for her.

Thomas Walker

The person who did most to help her, and who changed the direction of her life, was Thomas Walker. He was a missionary of the Church Missionary Society who had been working in the Tinnevelly district, in the far south of India, since the 1880s. He was a fine Tamil scholar, a teacher of Indian clergy and evangelists, and a much-loved speaker at conventions for the deepening of spiritual life. By the usual account Amy met him and his

wife while they were away in the hills, and Walker agreed to help her with her Tamil.

It was the beginning of a partnership that would last sixteen years, until Walker's death in 1912. Amy admired him enormously. He was a disciplined, scholarly and humble man, and he combined a deep personal devotion with a hard-headed realism about the work. He had little patience with sentimental reports or inflated numbers. He was also, by temperament, a man who was not easily impressed, and the young Irishwoman with her intensity and her poor health was not an obvious recruit. But he saw in her a real gift and a real call, and he took her seriously.

In 1896 Amy left Bangalore and went to the Tinnevelly district to live and work with the Walkers. It was an unusual arrangement. She remained a missionary of the Zenana Society, but she was to work under the direction of a missionary of another society, in a place her own society had not chosen. It was the kind of arrangement that only made sense because of the people involved, and it would last, in one form or another, for the rest of Walker's life. When Amy wrote his biography in 1916, she called it simply *Walker of Tinnevelly*.

Not Fashioned According to This World

The verse at the head of this chapter is Paul's appeal to the Christians at Rome: "be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." The word Paul uses for being fashioned suggests being pressed into a mould. He is warning against letting the surrounding culture shape the Christian life, and calling instead for a transformation that comes from within.

Amy Carmichael's months in Bangalore were in a sense a confrontation with that verse. She saw, or thought she saw, a missionary community that

had been pressed into the mould of British colonial life, and she was determined not to be pressed into it herself. In the years that followed she would reject much of that life: the European dress, the social round, the separation from Indian people. She would wear a sari, eat Indian food, live in Indian houses, and adopt many Indian customs.

But there is a subtler point in Paul's words, and Amy would come to feel it in time. It is possible to resist one mould and be pressed into another. A missionary who rejects the colonial club can still carry colonial attitudes in her heart; a reformer who rejects worldliness can still be shaped by pride. The transformation Paul speaks of is not achieved by changing one's clothes, important as that may be. It is the work of God renewing the mind. Amy Carmichael's life would show both sides of this: a remarkable freedom from many of the habits of her time, and a sharing in some of its assumptions that she never fully saw. She left Bangalore having learned what she did not want to become. She was about to learn, in the villages of Tinnevelly, what she was meant to be.

The Starry Cluster

"And they that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."
— Daniel 12:3, ASV

The Far South

The Tinnevelly district, now Tirunelveli, lies at the southern tip of the Indian peninsula, where the land narrows towards Cape Comorin. To the west rise the Western Ghats, a wall of mountains that catches the monsoon rains and sends them down in rivers across the plain. To the east the land falls away in a great red plain dotted with palmyra palms, rice fields watered by tanks, small towns and hundreds of villages, to the sea. It is hot for most of the year, and dry for much of it. In Amy Carmichael's day most people lived by farming, by climbing the palmyra palms for their sap, or by trades handed down through their castes.

It was also one of the few places in India where Christianity had taken deep root. Protestant missionaries had worked there since the eighteenth century, and in the early nineteenth century the German missionary Charles Rhenius, working for the Church Missionary Society, had seen large numbers of people, especially among the palmyra-climbing Shanar community, now known as Nadars, become Christians. Whole villages had

come over together, and Christian villages with their own churches and schools had grown up across the district. By the 1890s the Christian community in Tinnevelly numbered tens of thousands, served by Anglican missions of two societies, by Indian pastors, and by catechists and schoolmasters in many villages.

But it was still a small minority. Eugene Stock, introducing Amy's first book about the district, reckoned that there were about twenty Hindus to every Christian. Most of the Christians came from a handful of communities, and the caste Hindus of the district, especially the higher castes, had remained largely untouched. The Christian presence was strong enough to be familiar, and familiar enough to be resented. To a high-caste Hindu family, conversion to Christianity meant joining the people of lower castes who had already done so, and losing caste, family and inheritance in the process.

With the Walkers

Amy came to Tinnevelly in 1896 and lived at first with the Walkers at Palamcottah, the chief mission centre of the district. Later they moved to Pannaivilai, a village in the east of the district, where Walker had charge of a wide area of country and of the training of Indian Christian workers. Amy studied Tamil under Walker's guidance, and as her Tamil improved she began to go out into the villages.

Walker was a demanding teacher. He expected her to learn the language properly, not just enough to get by, and he insisted on accuracy. He was also a model of the kind of missionary she wanted to be: someone who lived for the work, who knew the people and their language deeply, who prayed, and who did not exaggerate. Mrs. Walker, whom Amy's books call simply "the Ammal," became a close friend and, in many ways, a second mother.

The Band

The work Amy took up was itinerant evangelism among women. With a small group of Indian Christian women she travelled from village to village, staying for days or weeks in one area and then moving on, visiting homes, talking with women, singing, and telling the story of Jesus. In her books she called them the Band, and its members the Band Sisters. They became known in Tamil by a name that has been translated as "the Starry Cluster," and the image stuck.

The women of the band were the heart of the work. They knew the language and the customs, they could go into homes where a foreigner would not be welcome, and they could speak of their own experience of Christ in a way that a foreigner could not. Amy described in *Things as They Are* how much depended on this. "To hear one of their own people saying, with evident sincerity, 'One thing I know, that whereas I was blind now I see,'" she wrote, "makes them look at each other and nod their heads sympathetically." She called it the "simple witness," and she believed that nothing told more.

The leading member of the band was Ponnammal, a young widow from a Christian family. In Tamil society a widow was expected to live a hidden and restricted life, and even in Christian families some of those expectations lingered. Ponnammal broke with them to join the band, and she became one of its most effective workers and Amy's closest Indian friend. Amy would later write her life, and she would mourn her deeply when she died. Other women joined over the years, some of them, like Ponnammal, widows; others young converts who had come out of Hindu families at great cost. Amy lived with them, travelled with them, ate with them and prayed with them, and the band became a kind of family, the first of several she would build.

On the Road

Things as They Are is full of the texture of these journeys. The band travelled by bandy, a springless bullock cart with a mat roof, over roads that were often nothing but ruts. "Crash and tumble went the bandy," Amy wrote, describing an afternoon when the floods were out and the cart rolled into a pool, so that "the water swished in at the lower end and floated our books out quietly." They fished the books out and went on, "somewhat damp, but happy."

In the villages they were a sensation. Amy wore Indian dress, but she could not do without a sun hat, which marked her out at once. On one occasion a little girl caught sight of the hat through the end of the cart and ran to tell the village: "A great white man is here! Oh what an appalling spectacle!" Amy enjoyed the story, and enjoyed even more the contrast with a magazine article at home which claimed that Indian women thought the lady missionary fairer and more divine than anything they had ever imagined. "Was it not an appalling spectacle?" the villagers said instead. In another chapter she mentioned the hat again, calling it "the only foreign thing about me which was visible—oh that I could dispense with it!"

The women they met asked endless questions. Was she married or a widow? Why did she wear no jewels? Where were her relations? Why had she left them? What did the government pay her? Why did she not oil her hair? Amy recorded these questions with humour and patience, and she knew that they had to be answered before anything else could be said. "If we ignore their desires," she wrote of the women's natural curiosity, "we defeat our own."

Humdrum

But the heart of *Things as They Are* is not the comedy of the road. It is the hardness of the work. Day after day the band visited homes, told the story of Jesus, and saw nothing happen. People listened politely, or stared, or laughed, or wandered away. A girl at a potter's wheel asked whether, if she joined the Christian way, she would get a new sari and good curry every day. An old woman, on the point of interest, drew back when she understood that following Christ would mean the end of her place in her family. The men of one village forbade their children to learn to read lest they be drawn to the missionaries.

Amy called one chapter "Humdrum," and she meant it. "There have been times of late," she wrote, "when I have had to hold on to one text with all my might: 'It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.' Praise God, it does not say 'successful.'" She refused to dress up the work for readers at home. "Most days in real life," she wrote, "end exactly as they began, so far as visible results are concerned."

That honesty was costly. Supporters at home wanted encouraging news, and missionary magazines were full of it. To write that most days ended as they began was to risk discouraging the people whose prayers and gifts sustained the work. But Amy believed that the truth would produce better prayer than a pleasant fiction. She also believed, and this is easy to miss, that faithfulness without visible success was itself a kind of joy. "There is joy in the doing of it," she wrote of the humdrum work, "there is joy in just obeying."

Caste

The great obstacle, as Amy came to see it, was caste. The Hindu social order divided people into thousands of hereditary communities, each with its own occupation, customs and rules about food, marriage and contact with others. To belong to a caste was to belong to a people: to have a place, a trade, a family, and a network of obligations and protections. To break caste, by eating with people of other castes or by joining a religion that ignored caste, was to lose all of that.

Amy did not think that every Hindu who heard the gospel was indifferent to it. She met people who seemed to be moved, and who asked questions that showed real interest. But again and again she saw that interest die when the cost became clear. "However tenderly you tell it," she wrote, "the keen Hindu mind soon perceives the drift of it all—Redemption must mean loss of Caste." A potter told her that he could not imagine a potter changing his caste; his caste was his trade, his life, and everything he knew. "Caste and religion!" she wrote. "They are so mixed up that we do not know how to unmix them."

Modern readers will want to be careful here. Amy wrote about caste as a missionary, convinced that it was a barrier to the gospel and a source of cruelty. She was not wrong that it caused great suffering, especially to those at the bottom of the hierarchy, and many Indian reformers of her day, Hindu as well as Christian, said the same. But she also tended, like most missionaries of her time, to see caste only from the outside, as a system of bondage, and to miss the sense of identity, belonging and mutual care that it also gave. The Indian Christian churches, moreover, were not free of caste themselves; in Tinnevelly, as elsewhere, caste divisions persisted among Christians, a fact that Amy acknowledged and grieved over. She

would later insist that at Dohnavur there should be no caste distinctions at all, and she held to that with great firmness.

Stars

The verse at the head of this chapter, from the book of Daniel, promises that "they that turn many to righteousness" shall shine "as the stars for ever and ever." It is a promise that would have been on the minds of the women of the Starry Cluster. But it is worth noticing what the verse does not say. It does not say that the stars are seen. Stars shine whether or not anyone looks at them, and some of the brightest are far away and faint to the eye.

The women of the band did not turn many to righteousness, if we count by numbers. In the years they travelled together they saw a handful of converts, most of whom paid a terrible price for their faith, and some of whom fell away. Much of their work was sowing in ground that showed no sign of harvest. But Amy Carmichael believed that the promise was true, and that faithfulness would shine in the end, whatever the numbers said. The women of the band, most of whose names are not remembered, were among the first stars in her sky. Ponnammal, above all, would shine in Amy's memory for the rest of her life.

The Cost of One Soul

"Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or mother, or father, or children, or lands, for my sake, and for the gospel's sake, but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life."
— Mark 10:29-30, ASV

"With Persecutions"

The promise of Jesus at the head of this chapter is one of the most generous in the Gospels. Those who leave home and family for his sake will receive a hundredfold, in this life as well as the next: houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, lands. But tucked into the middle of the list are two words that are easy to read past: "with persecutions." The hundredfold comes, but it comes with suffering attached.

In the villages of Tinnevelly at the end of the nineteenth century, those two words were not a footnote. For a Hindu of caste, especially a girl or a young woman, to become a Christian was to leave house and family in the most literal sense. It could also mean danger. Amy Carmichael spent the years from about 1897 to 1901 learning what that meant, not from books

but from the people she came to love. Much of *Things as They Are* is about them.

Seeds and Opposition

By the late 1890s the work of the band was beginning to show some fruit. Here and there, in villages across the district, individuals were showing real interest in the gospel. They were few, and most of them were young: boys in their teens, girls even younger. They listened when the band came, asked questions, learned texts and hymns, and sometimes said openly that they believed.

The response of their families and communities was swift. Amy described it in a chapter she called "The Prey of the Terrible," after a verse in Isaiah about captives being delivered from the mighty. A girl who listened in the shadow of a doorway was sent away to relatives and then, it was said, carried off over the mountains. A clever boy of seventeen who took the gospel's part in an argument with village elders was suddenly married and sent away. Another girl, known to be an enquirer, was passed from village to village among her relatives until she was too frightened to show any interest at all. "It is often like that," Amy wrote. "Just at the point where the soul-poise is so delicate that the lightest touch affects it, something, someone, pushes it roughly, and it trembles a moment, then falls—on the wrong side."

It is important to read these stories fairly. The families who did these things were not monsters. From their point of view, a son or daughter who became a Christian was being lost to them, their caste and their gods, and was bringing disgrace on the whole family. To break caste was, in their eyes, one of the worst things a person could do, and the effects would fall not only on the convert but on brothers and sisters whose marriages might

become impossible. Many of the families acted out of love and fear as much as out of hostility. Amy knew this. She wrote of a boy whose father, who "loved him dearly," nerved himself to flog his son, and of a mother who sat with her hair undone and wailed the death-wail for a son who had gone to the Christians. She did not pretend that the cost fell only on the converts.

Children Who Could Not Be Kept

There was a further difficulty, and it was legal. Under the law of British India, a minor could not leave her parents or guardians to live with others, and a missionary who sheltered an under-age convert against her family's wishes could be prosecuted. The law was there for good reason: it protected children from being taken from their families by anyone with a claim on them, and missionaries were not exempt. Amy accepted the principle. "It would never do," she wrote, "if anyone could decoy away a mere child from her parents or natural guardians."

But she found its working cruel. When a convert came, the police had to be told, and one of the first questions was age. If a girl could prove that she was over sixteen, and in some cases eighteen, she was free to choose. If she could not, she had to go back. In the villages there were often no birth registers, and the horoscope that recorded a child's birth was kept by the family, who could refuse to produce it or produce a false one. "The whole burden of proof lies upon us," Amy wrote, and she felt it as an injustice.

She told the story of one girl, whom she called Treasure, who was eager to be baptised and was ready to stand before a judge and say so. Amy had to tell her that unless her age could be proved, the missionaries had no power to protect her, and that it would be worse for her if she came and was then sent back. Amy remembered the tears in the girl's eyes, and the question she asked: "Would God let them take me away? Would He not take care of

me?" Treasure stayed at home, and suffered for her faith there. Amy did not soften the account of what she suffered, and she left the reader with the question.

The First to Come Out

Not all the stories ended in loss. In these years a small number of converts did come out of their homes and join the band, some of them girls who were old enough to choose, others who came with the consent, however reluctant, of their families. They became the core of Amy's first household. In *Things as They Are* she gave them translated names: Victory, Jewel of Victory, Golden, Star, Pearl and others. They lived with her and the Walkers, learned, prayed, and went out with the band to tell others what had happened to them.

One of the most important of them was Arulai, a girl from a Hindu family who came to faith in these years and came to live with Amy. Arulai would grow into one of the most trusted leaders of the Dohnavur Fellowship, and Amy came to rely on her as on few others. Her story is a reminder that the work of these years was not only loss. Some of the seeds that seemed so fragile became trees.

The cost to the converts was nonetheless real. They had left their families, often without their blessing. They had lost their place in their communities. They lived as members of a small, embattled Christian household, dependent on the missionaries and on one another. Some of them had to endure years of hostility from their families, and some were never reconciled. In such circumstances it was not surprising that some fell away. Amy wrote that converts were "a responsible joy," and she meant both words.

Two Boys

One story from these years shows both the joy and the cost more clearly than any other. Two boys from Hindu families had come to faith and joined the household. The younger was an only son, heir to considerable property. When he decided to follow Christ, his father flogged him twice, and when he finally left home his relatives came in a crowd to the bungalow and sat in a circle around him, pleading with him to return. They offered him a house, lands, his inheritance at once, and a bride with a rich dowry, and they promised him freedom to worship as he pleased if only he would come back and save his caste. "I will not go back," he said.

A year or so later both boys were baptised together, with others, during a holiday by the sea. Amy called them Shining of Victory and Shining of Life. A few weeks later both died of cholera, one after the other, in the same order in which they had gone down into the water. The younger boy died in the presence of his parents and of Hindu neighbours who taunted him that this was his reward for breaking caste. Too weak to say much, he pointed upward and tried to sing a line from one of the band's choruses. His mother wailed; his father stood silent, looking at his son.

Amy did not pretend to understand it. "Was it worth the pain it cost?" she asked. "Such a short time to witness, was it worth while?" Her answer was not an argument but a statement of faith. In their short time each boy had found one other boy, who might never have been found if the cost had been counted too great. And she believed that if the boys themselves could be asked, "they would tell you Jesus' welcome made it far more than worth while." It is the answer of the promise at the head of this chapter: a hundredfold, with persecutions, and in the world to come eternal life.

Publicity and Peril

One lesson of these years would shape the rest of Amy's life as a writer and as the head of a mission. She learned that publicity could be dangerous. Supporters at home wanted stories of converts, with names and pictures, and missionary magazines printed them gladly. But in Tinnevelly, she found, a convert whose story was told could be traced, and a family that learned of a child's interest in Christianity could act to stop it. "A certain connection has been observed between publicity and peril," she wrote, and "we have learned by experience to fear any attempt to photograph spiritual fruit."

That was why she changed names in her books, and why she sometimes left stories untold. It was also one of the roots of the reticence that would later mark Dohnavur, which made no appeals, published few details, and guarded its children from visitors and cameras. Critics sometimes saw that reticence as secrecy, or as a way of avoiding scrutiny. For Amy, it began as a way of protecting people whose lives might depend on it.

A Question for Readers

Modern readers may find these chapters of *Things as They Are* hard to read, and not only because of what they describe. Amy wrote as a partisan. She believed that Hinduism held its people in spiritual bondage, and she described Hindu families who opposed conversion as instruments of the devil. She did not often stop to ask how the same events looked from the other side, or to acknowledge that Christian families, too, have sometimes responded to a child's change of faith with fury and cruelty. Some of the worst stories she reported came to her second-hand, and she could not verify them.

Yet she was not simply a polemicist. She recorded the courtesy, hospitality and intelligence of the Hindu people she met, and she often wrote of them with affection. She admitted the faults of Indian Christians and of missionaries. And she was right about something that is easy to forget in a more comfortable age: that for many people in many places, following Christ has meant losing everything else. Jesus did not hide that cost from his disciples. Amy Carmichael did not hide it from her readers. The next chapter tells how one small girl, who had nothing at all to lose, found her way to the Christian household at Pannaivilai, and changed the direction of Amy's life.

Pearl-Eyes

"Thou hast seen it; for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand: The helpless committeth himself unto thee; Thou hast been the helper of the fatherless."
— Psalm 10:14, ASV

A Child at the Church Door

On an evening in early March 1901, a little girl was found alone outside the church at Pannaivilai. It was getting dark. She was about seven years old, with tumbled hair and frightened eyes, and she did not belong to the village. A Christian woman found her there and, rather than send her home in the dark, took her into her own house for the night. In the morning the child insisted that she wanted to see a particular foreign lady, and the woman, guessing who she meant, brought her to the mission bungalow.

The date usually given for her arrival at the bungalow is 7 March 1901. Amy Carmichael was sitting reading on the verandah when they came. The child ran straight to her, climbed onto her knee without the least fear, and began to tell her story. Her name, Amy wrote in her first account of it, was Pearl-eyes, and she wanted to stay there always. "I have come to stay," she said.

In Amy's later books and in all the biographies the child is called by her Tamil name, Preena. In *Things as They Are*, written within a year or two of

the event, Amy used the English translation, Pearl-eyes, as she did for almost everyone she wrote about, to protect them. Her account in that book is the earliest we have, and the closest to the events, and this chapter follows it.

Her Story

The story the child told, as Amy recorded it, was this. Her mother had given her, as a baby, to women attached to a temple in a nearby town, whom Amy calls the Servants of the gods. She had grown up in their house. She was not happy there; nobody loved her. Some months before, the woman who kept her had burned her little fingers as a punishment for some childish fault, and she had run away. She knew that her mother lived in a town about twenty miles to the east, and she set out to walk there. Some kind people on the road let her travel with them, and after three days she reached the town, where she searched the streets, describing her mother to strangers, until she found her. "My mother cried," she told Amy. But the temple woman had followed her, and her mother gave her up again.

Back in the temple house, the child overheard the women talking about her. She was soon to be "married to the god," the phrase used for the ceremony by which a girl was formally dedicated to a temple, or, as they put it, "tied to a stone." She did not understand all that it meant, but she understood enough to be terrified. Amy recorded what she did next. She ran into the temple, slipped past the priests, stood before the image of the god in the dim shrine, clasped her hands and prayed to it, "Let me die! Oh, let me die!" Amy added: "Barely seven years old, and she prayed, 'Oh, let me die!'"

Then came the detail that brought her to Pannaivilai. While Amy and the Walkers had been away at Dohnavur, one of the Tamil women of the

band had passed through the child's town, and the temple women, wanting to frighten the child, had pointed her out and said that she was "the child-stealing Ammal." It was meant as a warning. It had the opposite effect. The day after Amy returned, the child decided to go and look for the child-stealing Ammal, and she walked to Pannaivilai alone.

A Note on the Burned Hands

Popular retellings of this story usually say that Preena's hands had been branded with hot irons as a punishment for her first escape. Amy's own account in 1903 puts it a little differently: the burning came first, as a punishment "for some childish fault," and the child ran away afterwards. The difference is small, but it is worth noting as an example of how the story has grown. The cruelty was real either way. A child of six or seven had been burned by the woman who was supposed to care for her, and had run twenty miles to find a mother who sent her back.

The Temple Women

Within hours the women from the temple house arrived. Walker, whom Amy calls the Iyer, asked who they were. One of them answered, "We are Servants of the gods," and another was overheard reproaching her for admitting it. They called the child and told her to come home. She would not go, and the missionaries would not force her.

A larger crowd came later, and one woman, whose presence clearly terrified the child, demanded that she say aloud, before them all, that she would not go back. The child was struck dumb with fear. Amy dared not go near her, lest she be accused of bewitching her, and she signed to one of the convert girls, Star, who had been through such a scene herself, to take

the child out of the room for a moment. Out of sight of the woman, the child sobbed that if she refused they would catch her and punish her dreadfully, and she showed the cuts on her skin where she had been punished before. Then she came back, stood before them all, and cried, "I won't! I won't!" The crowd went away.

The danger was not over. The temple women said they would write to the child's mother, who had legal authority over her. One of them accused the child of being a thief, a common charge in such disputes, which could be used to bring the police; the sum in question turned out to be fourpence halfpenny, which the missionaries paid. There was talk of a plot to snatch her back. For weeks the household never let her out of sight.

The Law and the Child

It is important to understand what Amy and the Walkers were risking. Under the law, the child belonged to her mother, and through her mother to the women to whom she had been given. To keep her against their will was, on the face of it, to take a minor from her lawful guardians, which was a criminal offence. Amy noted in her account that if the facts could be proved, "the Government would be on our side in such a matter," because the dedication of minors to temples for an immoral life was already, in principle, against the law. "Only the great difficulty might be to prove it."

That would be the pattern of the next half-century. The law of British India did forbid the sale or disposal of minors for prostitution, and courts had sometimes held that dedicating a girl to a temple for such a life fell under that law. But proof was almost impossible to obtain. The ceremonies were religious; the arrangements were made within families; the girls were usually too young to testify; and the communities concerned closed ranks against outsiders. Missionaries who took in such children could find

themselves accused of kidnapping, and some were. Amy and the Walkers decided to keep Pearl-eyes and take the consequences. The early sources do not say whether the temple women ever went to law over her, but she was not taken back.

Fourpence Halfpenny

The child stayed, and she quickly became part of the household. Amy described her playing with dolls, setting out leaves and flowers in rows, cooking imaginary meals of sand with three pebbles for a hearth and a shell for a pot, and inviting the missionaries and her doll to dine. When she first arrived at the Christian woman's house she had refused the curry and rice she was offered, drawing herself up and asking whether she, a child of good caste, could be asked to break her caste. A few weeks later she was playing at church with her doll and insisting that it should have its collection too.

Amy recorded one exchange that she treasured. Some weeks after the excitement of the first day, she was teaching the child the text about being redeemed "not with corruptible things, as silver and gold," and explaining how much Jesus had paid for us. The child interrupted. "Oh yes, I understand!" she said. "I know how much you paid for me—fourpence halfpenny!"

Attracted by the Influence

Amy called the chapter in which she told this story "Attracted by the Influence." The phrase came from a letter by Thomas Ragland, a Cambridge scholar who had worked as a missionary in Tinnevelly half a century earlier, and whose life Amy would later write. Ragland had tried to express the worth of a single soul in the language of astronomy, and had

written of the soul of the poorest outcast as a body with mass and weight enough to draw down the Creator of the heavens to save it. Amy took up the image. Nowhere, she wrote, did she see the glory of God more than in "chapters of life which show Him bending down from the circle of the earth, yea rather, coming down all the way to help it, 'attracted by the influence' of the need of a little child."

She also saw the hand of God in the timing. If the child had come to Pannaivilai a few weeks earlier, when the missionaries were away, there would have been nobody to protect her. If the Christian woman had taken her home that first night, she would have been lost. Amy listed these "touches that tell how God cares," and they are the heart of her account. The psalm at the head of this chapter says that God sees mischief and spite, that the helpless commit themselves to him, and that he has been "the helper of the fatherless." Amy believed she had seen that verse acted out on her verandah.

The Beginning

Amy Carmichael always regarded the coming of Preena as the beginning of the work for which she is remembered. Until then her attention had been on the women of the villages and the converts of the band. She had heard of the temple children, and had seen them playing in courtyards near the temples, "gracious little maidens," she wrote, "winsome in their ways." But she had felt powerless. "One longs to help the little things," she wrote, "but no hand of ours can stretch over the wall and lift even one child out."

Now a child had climbed over the wall by herself. Amy began to ask questions: how many such children there were, how they came to the temples, what happened to them, and whether anything could be done. The answers would occupy her for the rest of her life. Preena herself grew

up in Amy's household and stayed with the family that grew around her. She had come, as she said, to stay.

Dohnavur

"The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; Yea, I have a goodly heritage."
— Psalm 16:6, ASV

Under the Mountains

Dohnavur lies on the plain at the foot of the Western Ghats, in the far south-west of the old Tinnevelly district, a few miles from the boundary of what was then the princely state of Travancore. Amy Carmichael described its setting in the first pages of *Things as They Are*: "The Western Ghauts sweep down to the sea in curves. Dohnavur is in one of the last of these curves. There are no proper roads running under the mountains, only rough country ruts crossing the plain." The mountains rise steeply behind the village, blue in the morning and purple at dusk, and in the monsoon their streams come down in white threads. On the plain below are rice fields, palmyra palms and the great irrigation tanks that the people call lakes.

Amy loved the place from the first. She found in it something of the hills and waters of the English Lake District, where she had lived with Robert Wilson. Near one village, she wrote, "the Red Lake lies at the mountain foot; we call it Derwentwater, but there are palms and bamboos, and there is no Friar's Crag." It was a homesick joke, and a tender one. She would live within sight of those mountains for fifty years.

A Village with a History

Dohnavur was not an ordinary Tamil village. It had been founded in the 1820s as a Christian settlement by Charles Rhenius, the German missionary whose work had done so much to plant the church in Tinnevelly. Converts who had been driven out of their own villages by persecution were given land and a place to live where they could practise their faith in safety. The money for the land came, according to the village's own tradition, from a Prussian nobleman, Count Dohna, and the village was named after him. It had a church, a school and a Christian community that by Amy's day had been there for three generations.

It was, in other words, a place of refuge from the start. Amy and the Walkers did not create its character; they inherited it. When the household that grew up around Amy began to shelter children who had nowhere else to go, it was continuing, in a new form, the purpose for which the village had been founded.

The Old Testament law appointed cities of refuge, scattered through the land of Israel, to which a person in danger of vengeance could flee and be safe until justice was done. They were not prisons, and they were not fortresses; they were places where the vulnerable could live under protection. The image was a familiar one in Amy Carmichael's tradition, and it fits Dohnavur well. In its earliest days it had sheltered converts whose own villages would not let them live. In her day it would shelter children whom the custom of their communities had marked out for a life they had not chosen. A refuge is only as good as its gate, and Amy would guard the gate of Dohnavur, for better and sometimes for worse, with all her strength.

The Move

The Walkers and Amy had spent time at Dohnavur in 1900, and it is that period of work in "the south of the South" that much of *Things as They Are* describes. After Preena's coming in March 1901 at Pannaivilai, they made a more permanent move. Thomas Walker took on responsibilities there, including, by the usual account, the training of young Indian men for Christian service, and in 1901 the whole household moved there: the Walkers, Amy, the women of the band, the converts, and now Preena.

Nobody intended at the time that Dohnavur would become the centre of a large work. Walker had come to teach, and Amy and the band expected to go on with their village evangelism, using Dohnavur as a base. But the household was changing. Within a short time after Preena came, other children began to arrive: girls who had been in danger of temple dedication, girls whose families could not or would not keep them, and in time babies. Amy found that she could not travel with the band and care for small children at the same time. The children needed a home, and the home needed a mother.

A Nursemaid?

The shift was not universally welcomed. Amy had come to India as an evangelist, and some of her fellow missionaries thought she was wasting her gifts. Caring for small children was work that Indian women could do, they felt, and a missionary who could speak Tamil and preach the gospel ought to be out in the villages. Her biographers record that some people said, in effect, that she had given up the work of a missionary to become a nursemaid.

Amy felt the force of the criticism, and she felt the loss of the itinerant work, which she loved. But she came to believe that God had given her a new task. The children who came to her had been rescued from a system that, as she saw it, destroyed both body and soul. They needed not only shelter but a Christian upbringing, and that could not be done by visiting. It needed a home, day after day and year after year. She came to believe that caring for children for Christ's sake was as spiritual a work as preaching, and that the washing of a baby could be an act of worship. That conviction runs through all her later writing about Dohnavur, and she lived by it from 1901 onward.

It is worth pausing on that change, because it says something about her. She was a woman of strong will and clear plans, and the plan had been village evangelism. When the children came, she let the plan go. She did not abandon evangelism; the children were taught the gospel, and many of them would become Christian workers themselves. But she accepted that God's purposes for her were not the ones she had chosen. It is one thing to say "not my will but thine"; it is another to give up the work one loves for a work one never asked for. Amy did it, and she never looked back.

The Shape of a Household

In these early years the household at Dohnavur was small. There were the Walkers and Amy; the women of the band, including Ponnammal; the girl converts, including Arulai; and a growing number of small children. They lived in simple buildings near the church, adapted for the purpose and gradually added to. Life followed a pattern of work, prayer, teaching and play. The women of the band still went out to the villages when they could, but more and more of their time was taken up with the children.

From the beginning Amy was determined that the household should be a family and not an institution. She was suspicious of the orphanages and boarding schools that many missions ran, with their rows of beds and uniforms and regimented routines. She wanted the children to grow up as Indian children in an Indian home, with Indian food, Indian dress and Tamil as their language. She wanted them to be loved individually, and she wanted them to love one another. Above all she wanted them to know Christ, not as a subject taught in school, but as a person known in daily life.

She also wanted to keep them safe. The children who came to Dohnavur had been taken, in many cases, out of the reach of people who regarded them as their property, and who might try to recover them by force, by stealth or by law. That meant watchfulness. It meant that the household could not be entirely open to visitors, and that the children were not free to wander. In these early years the watchfulness was necessary and obvious. In later years, as the work grew and the dangers changed, some observers would question whether the walls of Dohnavur, both literal and figurative, had grown higher than they needed to be. That question will return later in this book.

Visitors and a Book

In 1901 and 1902 the household had visitors from home, two women friends who came to India for some months to see the work for themselves. They travelled with the band, shared in the life of the household, and saw, as Amy put it, "the fight as it is." One of them was a keen photographer, whom the Tamils called the Picture-catching Missie Ammal, and whose pictures would illustrate the book that came out of their visit. Sitting on the floor of the verandah, Indian fashion, the two visitors urged Amy to gather the letters she had written home and make them into a book, so that others

could see what they had seen. Amy was reluctant. She had little time, she said, and the world had many books. But they offered to do the hard work of editing, and she agreed. The book they made was *Things as They Are*. Its story is the subject of the next chapter.

A Goodly Heritage

The psalm at the head of this chapter is a psalm of contentment. "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; Yea, I have a goodly heritage." The lines are the measuring lines used to divide land, and the psalmist is saying that the portion God has given him is a good one. But the psalm also makes clear that the real heritage is God himself: "Jehovah is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup" (Psalm 16:5, ASV).

Amy Carmichael's portion, from 1901, was a village on a hot plain at the foot of the mountains, a household of converts and children, and a work she had not chosen. She would spend the rest of her life there. She came to love it as her home, and she found in it, as she would have said, a goodly heritage. But she would also have said that the heritage was not Dohnavur. It was the Lord who had led her there.

Things as They Are

"but we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by the manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."
— 2 Corinthians 4:2, ASV

A Battle-Book

Things as They Are: Mission Work in Southern India was published in London by Morgan and Scott in April 1903. It was not a long book by the standards of the day, but it was an unusual one. It was made up of letters and sketches that Amy Carmichael had written home over about two years, gathered and arranged by the two friends who had visited her, and illustrated with their photographs. Each chapter was headed by quotations from missionaries of earlier generations, which Amy said were "meant to be read, not skipped," and were "more worthful than anything else in it."

She was clear about what kind of book it was. "The book is a battle-book," she wrote in her introduction, "written from a battle-field where the fighting is not pretty play but stern reality." She advised readers to take its harder chapters "alone in some quiet place with God." And she explained its title. Her friends had urged her to "tell about things as they actually are," and she had tried. But she felt that she had failed, because the reality she

wanted to show was spiritual and invisible, and what she could describe was only its outward effects. She called those effects, borrowing a poet's phrase, "the Dust of the Actual." The book, she said, "only touches the Dust."

What the Book Said

Most of *Things as They Are* is about the ordinary work of the band: the journeys by bullock cart, the visits to homes, the questions of the village women, the long afternoons in which nothing happened. It is often funny and always vivid. But underneath the anecdotes it makes an argument that was unwelcome to many readers at home. The argument was that the evangelisation of caste Hindus in South India was very hard and very slow; that most people who heard the gospel did not want it; that those who did often paid for it with the loss of everything; and that missionary reports which suggested otherwise were misleading.

She said this directly. "Do not, we entreat you, expect to hear of us doing great things, as an everyday matter of course," she wrote. "Do not expect every true story to dovetail into some other true story and end with some marvellous coincidence or miraculous conversion." She mocked, gently, the article which claimed that Indian women thought the lady missionary more divine than anything they had imagined, and another which said that Indian women never smiled. "We were surprised to hear it," she wrote. "We had not noticed it." She was as impatient with the sentimental picture of the longing heathen as with the triumphalist picture of the converted nation.

And in the later chapters she wrote about things that most missionary books left out: the persecution of converts, the deaths of some of them, and the dedication of girls to temples. She wrote about these things carefully,

without lurid detail, and she said repeatedly that she was leaving most of it out. But she did not leave out the fact of them.

Too Dark?

A story is often told that the manuscript was first sent to a missionary society or a publisher, who returned it with the advice that it was too dark and should be toned down, and that Amy refused to change anything but the title. The story is widely repeated, and it fits the book's own account of itself, but its details are hard to verify. What is certain is that Amy knew the book would be thought too harrowing, because she said so in the book. In the chapter called "Married to the God," about a little girl taken to a temple, she wrote:

> *"We are told to modify things, not to write too vividly, never to harrow sensitive hearts. Friends, we cannot modify truth, we cannot write half vividly enough; and as for harrowing hearts, oh that we could do it!"*

That passage is the heart of the book. She was not writing to shock for its own sake. She was writing because she believed that Christians at home would not pray as they ought unless they knew what they were praying about. "Oh, to care," she wrote, "and oh for power to make others care, not less but far, far more!"

Eugene Stock's Preface

The book carried a preface by Eugene Stock, the editorial secretary of the Church Missionary Society and its historian, one of the most respected figures in the missionary world. His endorsement mattered, and he gave it

without reserve. “I do not think the realities of Hindu life have ever been portrayed with greater vividness than in this book,” he wrote, “and I know that the authoress’s accuracy can be fully relied upon.” He added a sentence that has often been quoted since: “What she says is the truth, and nothing but the truth; but it is not the whole truth—that she could not tell. If she wrote it, it could not be printed. If it were printed, it could not be read.”

Stock also made a point that is easily forgotten. He said that the picture was drawn “without prejudice, with all sympathy, with full recognition of what is good.” And he admitted that missionaries had themselves to blame for some of the false impressions at home, because reports naturally dwelt on encouraging cases. “It is not a book to be read with a lazy kind of sentimental ‘interest,’” he wrote. “It is a book to send the reader to his knees—still more to her knees.”

Doubt and Confirmation

The book sold well. It was reprinted in August 1903, and again in the following years. But it also provoked doubt. Some readers in England could not believe that things were as bad as she said. Some called the book pessimistic. Others objected not to its facts but to its argument: that it was wrong to draw children away from their parents, or to break up families in the name of religion.

Amy took the objections seriously. In a chapter called “Three Objections” she set them out fairly. Readers had asked by what right missionaries pressed their religion on people who did not want it, and whether a convert should not stay at home and live quietly as a Christian there, rather than divide her family by leaving. One correspondent had written that girls who left their parents “richly deserve all they suffer.” Amy did not dismiss these questions. “We frankly admit that these objections

and proposals are naturally reasonable," she wrote, "and that what they state is perfectly true." She agreed that the right thing was for a convert to live among her own people, and she called the breaking of family ties "a very cruel thing." Her answer was that in caste society, as she had seen it, a convert was often not allowed to live at home as a Christian, and that she could not tell such a one to give up Christ.

When the fourth edition was being prepared, a number of experienced missionaries from other parts of South India sent notes confirming the book's accuracy, and they were printed at the front of later editions. A Baptist missionary among the Telugus wrote that there was not a line in it "that cannot be duplicated in this Telugu Mission." Others agreed. One of the notes came from an Indian woman whose voice carried more weight than any missionary's. Pandita Ramabai, the Marathi scholar and reformer who had founded a home for widows and famine girls at Mukti, and whose life is told in the sixth volume of this series, wrote: "While I was reading *Things as They Are*, I fancied I was living my old life among Hindus over again. I can honestly corroborate everything said in regard to the religious and social life of the Hindus."

A Hindu Reader's View

A fair account of the book must also ask how it would have read to a Hindu. Amy Carmichael wrote as an evangelical missionary, convinced that the religion around her was the work of spiritual darkness. She called one chapter "Deified Devilry." She described images of the gods as hideous, and temple festivals as revelry. She spoke of Hindu ascetics and priests in harsh terms. She sometimes generalised from the worst things she had seen or heard to the religion as a whole, as when she wrote that the practices she described were "Hinduism—not in theory of course, but in practice."

A devout Hindu reading those pages would have had every reason to object. Hinduism is not one thing but many, and most Hindus in Tinnevelly, as everywhere, had nothing to do with the abuses she described and would have condemned them. Hindu reformers of her own generation were campaigning against child marriage, the mistreatment of widows, and the very temple practices that she attacked, and they did so in the name of a purer Hinduism. Missionary writing that blamed the religion itself for every evil made their work harder, and fed a resentment of Christianity that has not disappeared.

It is only fair to add that Amy was capable of seeing beyond her own polemic. She wrote with real admiration of the intelligence, courtesy and humour of many of the Hindus she met. She recorded their objections honestly, and sometimes conceded their force. She described the grief of Hindu parents with compassion. And her purpose was not to win an argument but to rouse prayer. But the reader today is right to notice the hard edges of the book, and to read them as part of the history, not as the last word on the people she lived among.

The Manifestation of the Truth

The verse at the head of this chapter comes from Paul's defence of his own ministry. He had renounced craftiness, he said, and would not handle the word of God deceitfully; instead, "by the manifestation of the truth" he commended himself to every person's conscience before God. It was a claim to honesty, in a world where religious teachers were often suspected of trickery.

Things as They Are was Amy Carmichael's attempt to live by that verse. She would not commend the missionary cause by pleasant fictions. She would tell the truth, as far as she could see it and as far as it could be

printed, and leave the result to God. She did not see everything, and she sometimes saw through the lens of her own convictions. But the book's honesty about the work itself, its slowness, its failures and its cost, was rare in its time, and it remains bracing today. Three years later, wanting to show the other side of the picture that the first book had not had room for, she published a sequel called *Overweights of Joy*. The title said that the joys outweighed the sorrows. She never said the sorrows were unreal.

Servants of the Gods

"Deliver them that are carried away unto death, And those that are ready to be slain see that thou hold back. If thou sayest, Behold, we knew not this; Doth not he that weigheth the hearts consider it? And he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it?"
— Proverbs 24:11-12, ASV

A Hard Chapter

This chapter is about the system from which many of the children of Dohnavur were sheltered. It is the hardest part of Amy Carmichael's story to tell well, because it is easy to tell it badly in two opposite ways. It can be told as a lurid tale of heathen wickedness, in which a brave missionary rescues innocent girls from evil priests. Or it can be told as a story of missionary prejudice, in which a foreign woman misunderstood and slandered an ancient tradition of sacred art. Neither version is true. This chapter tries to tell it plainly, without graphic detail, and with fairness to everyone involved.

The Temple Women

For many centuries, in many parts of India and especially in the south, some temples had women attached to them who were dedicated to the service of the deity. In Tamil they were known by several names; in English

they came to be called devadasis, from a Sanskrit word meaning "servant of god," and Amy Carmichael translated their Tamil title as "Servants of the gods." A girl was dedicated in a ceremony that was spoken of as a marriage to the god, after which she could never marry a man and so, as the people said, could never be widowed. That was why their presence was considered auspicious at weddings and festivals.

The tradition had a long and in some ways distinguished history. Inscriptions from the great temples of the Chola period record the endowment of hundreds of temple women, and in some periods they held property, were educated when most women were not, and were the custodians of the classical traditions of dance and music. The dance that is now known around the world as Bharatanatyam descends in large part from their art. Communities of hereditary temple dancers and musicians, with their own family structures and inheritance through the female line, were part of the social fabric of South India for many generations.

But by the nineteenth century the tradition had changed in many places, and its connection with sexual relationships outside marriage had become central. A woman dedicated to a temple could not marry, and in practice many such women entered relationships with patrons, sometimes long-term and recognised, sometimes not. Girls were dedicated in childhood. Some came from hereditary families; others were given by parents who had made a vow, or who could not support them, or were bought from poor families, or were adopted by older temple women to carry on their household. Whatever the arrangement, the girl had no say in it. By the time she was old enough to understand, her life had been decided for her.

What Amy Saw

Amy Carmichael did not set out to study this system. She stumbled on it, as she put it, through the children. She had seen little girls playing in the courtyards near the temples, "gracious little maidens, winsome in their ways," and had heard that some of them had been bought as infants. In *Things as They Are* she described meeting a bright child in a village who asked to come home with her, and then, a few days later, seeing two men leading the same child away to be "married to the god." She wrote that the men's faces haunted her all night.

She had met the child once before, in her own village, and the memory of that meeting is one of the most striking passages in the book. Amy had been talking with the girl's grandmother, a learned old woman who could recite page after page of the Tamil classics and who preferred to sing Hindu verses to her visitor and explain them, rather than listen to Christian ones. "Consider the age of our great Religion, consider its literature—millions of stanzas!" the old woman said. While they talked, the little girl came and stood by the verandah and joined in the verses her grandmother was chanting, going on through stanza after stanza while Amy listened in astonishment. Then she ran off laughing to play. Amy's comment was brief: "And this was the child. All that brightness, all that intelligence, 'married to a god.'" It is worth noticing what the passage shows without meaning to: a family of real culture and learning, a grandmother proud of a great literary tradition, and a child of quick intelligence. Amy did not think the people around her were savages. She thought that something terrible was being done within a world that was in many ways refined, and that was what made it so hard to bear.

After Preena came, she began to inquire systematically. She wanted to know how many girls were involved, how they were obtained, where they

came from, and what happened to them. It was difficult and sometimes dangerous work. The subject was not discussed with outsiders, and certainly not with a foreign woman associated with the Christians. Information had to be gathered patiently, through Indian Christian helpers, through people who were willing to talk, and through official records such as the census of 1901, which Amy later drew on in *Lotus Buds*.

On some of these inquiries, it is said, she went in disguise. She already wore Indian dress, and popular accounts say that she darkened her skin, with coffee or some other stain, so that she could pass unnoticed in places where a European face would have closed every door. The details have been embellished, and should not be pressed. But it is clear that she went to great lengths to learn the truth, and that she took real risks in doing so.

What she learned convinced her that very large numbers of girls were involved across the Madras Presidency, and that many of them were destined, from early childhood, for a life of sexual exploitation in the name of religion. She did not publish the details. She said, again and again, that what she knew could not be printed. But she believed she knew enough to act.

Not a Western Discovery

It is important to say clearly that Amy Carmichael was not the first or the only person to oppose the dedication of girls to temples, and that the campaign which eventually ended it was led above all by Indians.

From the 1890s an "anti-nautch" movement, named after the Anglo-Indian word for a dance performance, had been campaigning against the hiring of temple dancers at social functions, and it drew support from Indian social reformers as well as from missionaries. In the early twentieth century Indian reformers in the Madras Presidency took up the cause in

earnest. The most important of them was Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy, the first woman to serve in the Madras Legislative Council, who in the late 1920s brought forward a resolution and then a bill to end the dedication of girls to temples. She had family ties to the communities concerned, and she argued her case in medical, moral and religious terms. Another powerful voice was Moovalur Ramamirtham, who came from a devadasi family herself and campaigned for decades, in the self-respect movement, for the freedom of women in her community to marry and live as they chose.

The campaign took many years. It was finally successful in October 1947, two months after Indian independence, when the Madras Devadasis (Prevention of Dedication) Act was passed. Other states passed similar laws later, some of them much later, and the practice persisted illegally in some regions for decades. Amy Carmichael lived to see the Madras Act passed. She had spent nearly half a century working towards the same end, but the law was the achievement of Indian legislators and campaigners, and it should be remembered as theirs.

The Other Side

There is one more thing to say, and fairness requires it. Not everyone in the communities concerned welcomed the reform. Associations of hereditary temple artists protested against the bill, arguing that their community was being slandered for the sins of some, that their art and their livelihood were being destroyed, and that they had a right to their own way of life. Historians of South India have shown that the abolition, whatever its benefits, also brought real losses to these communities. Their dance was taken up and refashioned by others, often from higher castes, while the women who had carried it for generations were stigmatised and impoverished. Some scholars, notably Davesh Soneji, have argued that

missionary writing, including Amy Carmichael's, helped to fix a picture of these women as nothing but victims or prostitutes, and that this picture did lasting harm to their descendants.

A Christian reader may disagree with some of that argument. The children Amy sheltered were not consenting adults choosing a way of life; they were small girls whose futures had been decided for them, and there is ample evidence that many such girls were abused. But the critique is a needed reminder that the women of these communities were human beings with their own voices and their own dignity, and that the language used about them, by missionaries and by Indian reformers alike, was often cruel. The real people behind the "system" deserve to be remembered as people, and not only as a problem.

Deliver Them

The verse at the head of this chapter is one that Amy Carmichael might have taken as her charter. "Deliver them that are carried away unto death," it says, "And those that are ready to be slain see that thou hold back." The next verse removes the excuse of ignorance: "If thou sayest, Behold, we knew not this; Doth not he that weigheth the hearts consider it?" Once we know, we are responsible.

That was how Amy saw it. Once she knew what she believed she knew, she could not unknow it, and she could not do nothing. She did not have the power to change the law, and she did not try to lead a public campaign. What she could do was to take in children, one at a time, and give them a home. It was a small response to a large evil. But she believed that God weighed hearts, and that he would ask what she had done with what she knew. She spent the rest of her life answering that question.

Lotus Buds

"He will feed his flock like a shepherd, he will gather the lambs in his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and will gently lead those that have their young."
— Isaiah 40:11, ASV

The Elf

Before there were nurseries at Dohnavur, there was one small girl who would not keep still. In *Things as They Are* Amy Carmichael gave a whole chapter to Pearl-eyes, whom she nicknamed the Elf, "because it exactly describes her." It is the happiest chapter in the book, and it shows a side of Amy that her more solemn admirers have sometimes missed.

The Elf, she wrote, was "a very wilful, truthful, exasperating, fascinating little Oriental." She hated her share of the housework, which was ten minutes' polishing of brass water-pots, until she made a discovery: "Satan doesn't come very close to me if I sing all the time I'm rubbing the brasses. He runs away when he hears me sing, so I sing very loud, and that keeps him away. Satan doesn't like hymns." She liked to be first, and to choose the game, and when the other children would not play it her way she walked off. And every evening she said her prayers in Amy's room, counting her sins on the fingers of one hand and her blessings on the other.

Amy recorded one of those prayers in full. The Elf confessed that she had been cross with another girl, but added that the other girl had been wrong too, "so it was only half a sin." She confessed a quarrel with some smaller children, but noted that they had asked her forgiveness and she had forgiven them, "so that is three bad things and two good things to-day." She thanked God for a cardboard box, some sweets, some rags from the waste-paper basket for her dolls' clothes, and a piece of soap the size of a walnut. And she asked, as she always did, to be kept safe through the night from "the bites of snakes and scorpions, and all other noxious creatures." Some time afterwards, Amy noted dryly, a nest of scorpions was discovered within six yards of the Elf's sleeping mat, and none of them had disturbed her.

There were two other small girls in the household at the time, whom Amy called the Imp and Tangles, and the three of them argued theology with the energy of children who had just discovered it. Amy reported one of their conclusions, which, she said, "would shock the orthodox." Obedience, the children had decided, was not so important as love. Orpah had obeyed her mother-in-law when Naomi told her to go home, and she went. Ruth had been told four times to go, and would not. Yet God blessed Ruth more than Orpah, because she loved her mother-in-law. "So obedience is not so important as love." Amy had spent the previous day, she confessed, labouring to explain to them the necessity of obedience. It is a lovely picture of a missionary being taught by her pupils, and of a teacher who was humble enough, and amused enough, to write it down.

The Elf also brought Amy questions that were not childish at all. One morning she had prayed earnestly to be kept from being naughty, and within an hour she had been naughty again; she had looked at the clock and seen. "How was it I was naughty when I wanted to be good?" she asked. "So what is the use of praying?" Amy recognised the question. It was Paul's

question in the seventh chapter of Romans, and it was her own question at the Glasgow convention years before. She did not pretend it was easy to answer.

These pages matter because they show how Amy saw the children. They were not cases, or trophies, or victims to be pitied. They were persons, with their own wills and their own humour, their own theology and their own sins. She delighted in them, and she let her readers delight in them too.

Babies

In the years after Preena came, the household at Dohnavur began to change in a way that Amy had not foreseen. At first the children who came were girls old enough to walk and talk, like Preena herself. But Amy learned that the girls most at risk were often very young, and that the time to save a child from dedication was before it happened, sometimes in infancy. From about 1904 babies began to come. Some were brought by mothers or relatives who could not keep them and who preferred that they should go to the Christians rather than to a temple. Some came through Indian Christian helpers who learned of children in danger. Some came by ways that Amy never fully described, for the safety of everyone involved.

Babies were a different matter from older children. They needed milk, and in a world without safe infant formula that meant wet nurses, Indian women who were paid to nurse them. They needed constant care. And they died. Infant mortality in South India at the beginning of the twentieth century was very high, and babies who had been separated from their mothers, often after neglect or a hard journey, were especially vulnerable. Many of the babies who came to Dohnavur in its early years did not survive. Amy grieved over every one of them, and she learned, through bitter

experience, how much skill and care it took to keep a newborn alive in that climate.

She learned too that babies could not be cared for in a corner of a missionary bungalow. Over the following years nurseries were built: simple buildings, open to the air, each with a group of small children and the women who cared for them. The compound grew, and with it the need for workers, for money, for food and for medicine. A household of converts was turning into something much larger.

Lotus Buds

In 1909 Amy published a book about the babies and small girls of Dohnavur. She called it *Lotus Buds*. The lotus grows in muddy water and opens into a flower of great beauty, and in Indian religious imagery it is a symbol of purity rising out of the mire. Amy used the image for the children, who had come, many of them, out of a dark place, and whom she hoped to see open into lives of beauty.

The book was handsomely produced, with fifty photographs of the children taken at Dohnavur, and it was the most carefully illustrated of her early books. In a chapter about the photographs she admitted, with some amusement, that they did not do the children justice; the babies were wary of the photographer, and their lively faces stiffened as soon as the camera appeared. The book also returned to the subject of temple dedication, drawing on official figures to show how many girls might be involved, but it did so with restraint. Its main purpose was to make readers love the children, and to pray for them and for the many others who were not safe.

Three years earlier she had published *Overweights of Joy*, a sequel to *Things as They Are*, which told of the joys of the work as frankly as the first book had told of its sorrows. The two books together give a picture of the

years between 1901 and 1909 that is neither triumphant nor despairing. There were many losses: converts who went back, babies who died, children who could not be saved. There were also great joys: children who grew, converts who stood firm, and a household that was beginning to feel like a family.

Gentle Leading

The verse at the head of this chapter is one of the most tender in the Old Testament. Isaiah, comforting a people in exile, describes God as a shepherd who "will gather the lambs in his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and will gently lead those that have their young." The picture is of strength used gently: a shepherd strong enough to carry the lambs, and wise enough not to drive the ewes too hard.

Amy Carmichael loved that verse, and she tried to live it. She was a strong woman, and she ran Dohnavur with a firm hand. But she wanted the children to know, above all, that they were carried. She held the babies, played with the toddlers, made up games and songs, and gave each child a name that meant something. The names were Tamil, chosen with care, and they often expressed a hope or a prayer for the child's life. She insisted that every child be treated as an individual, known and loved, not as one of a crowd.

It was not always possible. As the numbers grew, from a handful to dozens and then to more than a hundred, she could no longer know every child as she had known Preena and the Elf. She came to depend on the women who worked with her, Indian and British, and she gave great thought to how the children could be cared for in small groups, each with its own "mother." But the ideal remained: a family, not an institution, and a family that reflected the gentleness of the Good Shepherd.

A Growing Family

By 1913 there were about a hundred and thirty children at Dohnavur. That was a remarkable growth from the single child who had climbed onto Amy's knee twelve years before. It was also, by any standard, a large household to run, and it raised questions that Amy had not had to face before. How would the children be educated? What would happen to them when they grew up? Who would care for them if Amy fell ill or died? How would the work be paid for?

The last question had a clear answer, at least in principle. Amy had decided, following Hudson Taylor and George Müller, that Dohnavur would not appeal for money. Its needs would be made known to God in prayer, and the household would trust him to supply them. Gifts came, from friends in Britain and elsewhere, often unsolicited and sometimes at the very moment of need. Amy kept records of these answers to prayer, and they became an important part of the story she told about Dohnavur. She believed that the work was God's, and that he would provide for it as long as he wanted it to continue.

The other questions were harder, and they would occupy her for the rest of her life. But in the years around 1909, when *Lotus Buds* was published, the main feeling at Dohnavur seems to have been one of joy. The children were growing. The nurseries were full of noise. And Amy, who had once thought her work would be preaching in the villages, had found herself the mother of a family she could never have imagined.

Amma

"But we were gentle in the midst of you, as when a nurse cherisheth her own children: even so, being affectionately desirous of you, we were well pleased to impart unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were become very dear to us."
— 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8, ASV

A Name

The children of Dohnavur called Amy Carmichael *Amma*. In Tamil the word means "mother," and it is also, as she explained in the glossary to her first book, an ordinary word that women use in speaking to one another and that girls use to older women. For a child at Dohnavur it meant both things at once. It was a word of courtesy, and it was a word of belonging. Amy did not want to be called "Miss Carmichael," or "madam," or by any of the titles that missionaries in India usually bore. She wanted to be a mother to the children, and she wanted them to know it.

She was not, of course, their mother in the ordinary sense, and she knew it. Many of the children had mothers living, and some kept in touch with them. Some had been brought by their mothers. And as the family grew, Amy could not be a mother to each child in the way that a woman with a few children can be. But the name expressed what she hoped Dohnavur would be: not an orphanage, but a home.

Becoming Indian

From her early years in Tinnevelly, Amy wore Indian dress, and at Dohnavur she asked those who joined her to do the same. The women wore saris; the household ate Indian food, cooked in the Indian way; Tamil was the language of daily life. The children were given Tamil names, and they grew up in Tamil culture, learning Tamil songs and stories and the courtesies of Tamil life. Amy wrote many Tamil hymns and songs for them, and set Scripture to Tamil tunes.

This was not common among missionaries at the time. Many mission schools and orphanages in India gave their children English names, dressed them in European clothes, taught them English, and raised them to be, in effect, little Englishmen and Englishwomen. The aim was often sincere, and the results were mixed. Such children could find themselves strangers in their own country, cut off from their families and communities, and dependent on the mission for the rest of their lives. Amy wanted to avoid that. She wanted the children of Dohnavur to be Indian Christians, not Westernised Indians.

There was one Indian custom, however, that she would not adopt, and that was caste. The children who came to Dohnavur came from many communities, high and low, and Amy insisted that within the family those distinctions counted for nothing. The children ate together, played together, slept in the same nurseries, and were taught that they were sisters. For children from high-caste families this could be a hard lesson, as it had been for Pearl-eyes on her first night, when she drew herself up and refused food that would break her caste. For the families and communities outside, it was one of the most offensive things about Dohnavur, because it meant that a child who went there could never go back into her caste. Amy knew this, and she did not flinch from it. She believed that in Christ there was

neither high caste nor low, and that a Christian family which kept caste was not fully Christian.

It would be wrong to exaggerate the extent of her adaptation. She remained in many ways a woman of her own culture. She thought and prayed and wrote in English. Her books were addressed to British readers, and her theology was that of Keswick. Dohnavur was run according to her ideas of order and discipline, and those ideas were shaped by a Victorian upbringing. Some later observers felt that, for all its Indian dress and Tamil songs, Dohnavur was at heart a very British institution. There is truth in that, as there is in most such judgements. But for her time she went further than most, and she did it on principle.

The Accals

The real work of caring for the children was done, in large part, by Indian Christian women. They were known as the accals, from the Tamil word for "elder sister," and that name too was chosen with care. They were not servants or employees in the usual sense, but members of the family, responsible for the children in their care. Some of them were converts who had come out of Hindu homes, like Arulai; some were widows, like Ponnammal; some came from Christian families in the district; and in time many were girls who had grown up at Dohnavur themselves.

Ponnammal, the young widow who had led the band, became one of the chief pillars of the household. Amy relied on her for wisdom, for knowledge of Tamil ways, and for a kind of steady holiness that she deeply admired. Arulai, the girl convert from the Pannaivilai years, grew into another. These women, and many others whose names are recorded only in the Fellowship's own books, did most of the daily work of feeding, washing, teaching and comforting that made Dohnavur what it was.

Women from Britain and elsewhere also came to join the work, some for a few years and some for the rest of their lives. They were expected to learn Tamil, wear Indian dress, live simply, and accept the authority of the household. Not all of them stayed. Life at Dohnavur was demanding, and Amy's standards were high. But those who stayed formed a close-knit community, bound together by the work, by prayer, and by their loyalty to Amma.

Discipline and Love

Amy Carmichael was a loving mother, and she was also a strict one. She believed, as most people of her generation did, that children needed firm discipline, and that disobedience, lying and sulking should be dealt with promptly. She expected obedience, and she could be severe. Some of the children who grew up at Dohnavur remembered her with deep love and with a certain awe. Some of the adult workers found her exacting, and a few found her overbearing.

There is no need to pretend otherwise. A woman who had built a large and complex household out of nothing, against opposition, with very little help, was not likely to be meek. She had strong opinions about almost everything, from the way children should be fed to the way prayer meetings should be run, and she expected them to be followed. She could be sharp with those who disagreed, and she did not always distinguish between disagreement with her and disloyalty to the work. Those were real faults, and they caused real pain to some who loved her.

But her discipline was meant in love, and those who knew her best testified that it was received that way by most of the children. She had a gift for making each child feel important. She laughed easily, enjoyed jokes, invented games, wrote songs and stories, and loved the natural world,

which she taught the children to love too: birds, butterflies, flowers, streams, the mountains. She wanted Dohnavur to be a happy place, and by most accounts it was.

Not the Gospel Only

The verse at the head of this chapter comes from Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians. He reminds them that when he and his companions were among them, they were "gentle in the midst of you, as when a nurse cherisheth her own children." The word translated "nurse" means a nursing mother, and the image is of a mother caring for her own baby. Paul goes on: "we were well pleased to impart unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were become very dear to us."

That last sentence is a good description of what Amy Carmichael tried to do at Dohnavur. She did not want only to teach the children about God. She wanted to give them herself, and she wanted the women who worked with her to do the same. Her idea of Christian service was not a professional transaction, in which a missionary delivered a message and went home on furlough. It was a life given, day after day, to particular people who had become dear.

That was one of the reasons she never went home. There were other reasons too: her health, the long voyage, the cost, and later her injury. But the deepest reason was that her children were at Dohnavur, and she would not leave them. In the early years, the danger that a child might be taken back if she were away was real. Later it was simply that she could not imagine being anywhere else. Her home was where her family was.

A Mother's Cost

Being Amma cost Amy Carmichael a great deal. It cost her the evangelistic work she had loved. It cost her the possibility of ever going home, and of seeing her own mother again. It cost her rest, and often sleep, and sometimes health. It cost her grief, because children died, and some who lived turned away from what she had taught them. And it cost her a certain kind of freedom, because a mother is never free of her children.

She did not complain of it. She believed that she had been given the children by God, and that caring for them was her calling. But it is worth remembering, when we think of her as the saint of Dohnavur, that sainthood looked very ordinary from the inside. It looked like getting up at night to a sick baby, settling quarrels between small girls, checking the accounts, writing letters, and praying for children one by one by name. The verse from Thessalonians speaks of imparting not only the gospel but our own souls. Amy Carmichael imparted hers, piece by piece, over fifty years.

The Sorrowful Years

"Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt understand hereafter."
— John 13:7, ASV

The Dear Old Man

The first of the great losses had come some years earlier. Robert Wilson, the Quaker who had taken Amy into his home and given her his name, died in 1905. She had not seen him since she sailed for India ten years before. They had written to each other faithfully, and he had supported the work with his gifts and his prayers, but she had not been able to go home to him, and she was not with him when he died. Her early books had been published under the name Amy Wilson-Carmichael, and she went on using it for some years afterwards. It was her way of keeping faith with the old man who had been a father to her.

His death was a sorrow, but it was the kind of sorrow that missionaries far from home learned to expect. He was an old man, and he had lived a full life. The sorrows of the years between 1912 and 1915 were of a different kind. They came close together, and they took from Amy the people on whom she most depended.

Thomas Walker

In August 1912 Thomas Walker died. He had gone away from Dohnavur on a journey, and he fell ill and died within a short time, far from home. Sources give slightly different dates for his death, but all place it in the second half of August 1912.

For Amy it was a devastating blow. Walker had been her teacher, her colleague and her counsellor since 1896. He had taught her Tamil, guided her in the work, stood beside her when Preena came, and helped her to build the household at Dohnavur. He had been, in a sense, its head, the ordained missionary under whose authority the whole work went on. His scholarly mind and his steady judgement had balanced her intensity. Now he was gone, and she was left with the full responsibility for a growing family and its many workers, without the one man whose advice she trusted above all others.

Walker's own voice can still be heard in a few places. When Amy chose quotations from missionaries to head the chapters of *Things as They Are*, she included one from him, about the girls of caste families who wanted to follow Christ. "In India the bitter cry is far more bitter," he had written, "but it is stifled and smothered by the cruel gag of Caste." It is the sentence of a man who had spent many years listening, and who did not use strong words lightly. He had been in Tinnevelly since the 1880s, and he knew its churches, its villages and its language as few foreigners did. He was, by every account, a man of prayer, and his addresses at conventions for the deepening of spiritual life had been valued all over South India. When such a man said that something was terrible, people listened. Amy had relied on that authority more than she perhaps knew, and now she would have to stand without it.

Mrs. Walker, whom Amy loved deeply, was left a widow, and the partnership of three that had carried the work since the Pannaivilai days was broken.

She grieved, and she also wrote. Four years later she published *Walker of Tinnevelly*, a memoir of his life and work. It is a portrait of a man she admired without reserve, written with love and with the restraint he would have wanted. She did not make him a plaster saint. She showed a disciplined, scholarly, sometimes severe man who had given his life to the Tamil church, and whose influence ran far beyond the few places where he had lived.

A Wall and a Lawyer

The troubles did not come singly. Soon after Walker's death, while the household was still in mourning, a lawyer wrote to demand that the building of a wall around part of the compound should stop at once. The claim was that the land on which the wall was being built did not legally belong to the mission. It was the kind of dispute that could drag on for years, and it came at a time when Amy had no one with Walker's standing to deal with it.

It was not the only legal threat of these years. The work of sheltering children who were claimed by others was always exposed to the law, and there were families and communities who had every reason to try to use it. Amy's biographers record a case, about 1914, in which a charge of kidnapping was brought in connection with a girl named Muttammal whom the Fellowship was protecting, and in which Amy herself faced the possibility of arrest. The case was eventually dropped. The details are known chiefly from the later biographies, and this book has not been able

to check them against court records. But the general picture is clear enough. To shelter children at Dohnavur was to live under the shadow of the courts.

Her Mother

On 14 July 1913 Amy's mother died in England. Catherine Carmichael had given her daughter up twice, first to Robert Wilson and then to the mission field, and Amy had not been able to go home to her. She had followed the work with love and prayer, and she had supported it in every way she could.

We know little of how Amy received the news, beyond the fact of her grief. She had always been close to her mother, and her mother's letter of 1892, giving her freely to God, had been one of the treasures of her life. Now the woman who had taught her to pray, and who had let her go, was gone. Amy was forty-five. Her father had been dead for nearly thirty years, the Dear Old Man for eight. She had become, in the fullest sense, an orphan herself.

Ponnammal

The last of the great losses of these years was the hardest. Ponnammal, the young widow who had led the band in the 1890s and had become one of the pillars of Dohnavur, fell ill with a long and painful illness, which the biographies describe as cancer. Amy cared for her and watched her suffer. She died in 1915.

Ponnammal had been Amy's closest Indian friend. She had shared the early journeys, the hardships of village work, the joys and sorrows of the first converts, and the building of the household. She had cared for children, trained younger women, and given wisdom and steadiness to the

whole community. Amy admired her deeply, and in later years she wrote her life, under the title *Ponnammal: Her Story*. Ponnammal left a daughter, whom Amy took into her own care.

Amy found Ponnammal's suffering harder to bear than her death. She had prayed for her healing, and the prayer had not been answered. She had watched a woman she loved endure great pain, and had been unable to relieve it. It was the kind of experience that tests faith to its foundations, and Amy did not pretend that it was easy. But she came through it, as she came through so much, by holding on to the conviction that God knew what he was doing, even when she did not.

The War Years

In August 1914, between the death of her mother and the death of Ponnammal, war broke out in Europe. It was far from Dohnavur, but its effects reached even there. The cost of living rose sharply. Communications with Britain became slower and less certain. Gifts from home, on which the work depended, might have been expected to dry up, as friends faced their own hardships and anxieties. Amy and her household continued to live by prayer, making their needs known to God and not to people, and they later testified that through all those years they had never lacked what they needed.

It would be easy to make too much of that testimony, and Amy herself was careful not to suggest that God's provision meant there was never any anxiety, or that other faithful Christians who did go without were less faithful. But it was a real part of her experience, and it strengthened her conviction that the work was God's and not hers.

Understanding Hereafter

The words of Jesus at the head of this chapter were spoken to Peter at the Last Supper, when Jesus knelt to wash the disciples' feet and Peter protested. "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt understand hereafter." They are words that Christians have clung to in times of loss, because they promise understanding without demanding it now.

Amy Carmichael did not understand why Walker had to die when the work needed him most, why her mother had to die without seeing her again, or why Ponnammal had to suffer so much. She did not pretend to understand. She wrote later about the danger of offering easy explanations to people in pain, and about the need simply to trust. In one of her poems from these years she wrote of acceptance as the place where peace is found, and many readers have found in that phrase the key to her life after 1912. She did not mean resignation, or a dull submission to fate. She meant a deliberate choice to receive from God's hand what she could not understand, and to go on.

The years from 1912 to 1915 took from her almost everyone who had been with her at the beginning. They also left her, for the first time, fully in charge of the work she had built. What she did with that responsibility is the subject of the chapters that follow.

Boys

"And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is."
— Genesis 21:17, ASV

A Burden for Boys

For its first seventeen years the family at Dohnavur was a family of girls. That was natural. The danger that had first moved Amy Carmichael was the dedication of girls to temples, and the children who came to her were girls who had been, or might have been, caught up in it. The women who cared for them were women. The whole life of the household was shaped around the needs of girls and small children.

But Amy came to believe that boys too were in danger. In the course of her inquiries she learned that boys also were sometimes given to temples or to the travelling dramatic companies associated with temple festivals, and that some of them were exploited in ways that were as damaging as anything that happened to the girls. The subject was even more hidden than that of the girls, and even harder to speak about. But once she knew, she could not forget it.

According to the Fellowship's own history, the burden came to her about 1912. She began to pray that God would either take it away or show

her what to do about it. It was a practical as well as a spiritual question. A household of girls and women could not simply take in boys. It would need men to care for them, separate buildings, a different kind of education, and a great deal more money. And it would need, above all, a clear sign that this was God's will and not merely her own idea.

Waiting

The answer did not come quickly. For six years Amy prayed, and for six years nothing happened. Those were the years of Walker's death, her mother's death and Ponnammal's long illness, the years of the war, the wall and the lawyer. They were not years in which a new work could easily have been begun. But the burden did not go away, and she went on praying.

Waiting was not something that came naturally to her. She was a woman of action, impatient by temperament, and her instinct when she saw a need was to meet it. But she had learned, over many years, that her instincts were not always God's timing. In Japan she had acted quickly and come to regret it. At Dohnavur she had learned to wait for children to be brought, rather than going out to take them. Now she waited for six years on a matter she felt to be urgent. It was, in its way, as hard an exercise of faith as anything she did.

The First Boy

In January 1918 a baby boy was brought to Dohnavur. The circumstances, as the Fellowship remembered them, were unexpected; nobody had gone looking for him. Amy took his coming as the answer to six years of prayer. The household took him in, and the boys' work began.

Others followed. At first they were babies and small children who could be cared for in the nurseries alongside the girls. But as they grew older they needed a life of their own. Amy began to plan a separate compound for the boys, with its own buildings, its own school and its own workers. She was determined that the boys should be brought up as the girls were, as members of a Christian family rather than inmates of an institution, and that they should be prepared for useful lives as Indian men.

Men for the Work

The great need was for men. Amy could not bring up boys with only women to care for them, and she began to pray for men who would join the Fellowship and give their lives to the boys as the accals gave theirs to the girls. It was a hard prayer to answer. Men who came out to India as missionaries were usually ordained clergy or doctors or teachers attached to large institutions, and the kind of work Amy was offering, unpaid, unrecognised, and under the authority of a woman, did not appeal to many.

In time, however, men did come. Some were Indian Christians from the district; some were young men who had grown up at Dohnavur themselves; and in the 1920s a few British men joined the Fellowship. Among them were two brothers, Godfrey and Murray Webb-Peploe, members of a well-known evangelical family. Godfrey took a leading part in the boys' work, and Murray, who was a doctor, would serve in the Fellowship's medical work. Both stayed for many years, and Godfrey in particular became one of the pillars of the Fellowship in Amy's later life.

The arrival of men changed Dohnavur. It was no longer a household of women and children but a community with two compounds, the girls' and the boys', and with men and women working side by side under Amy's

leadership. That raised new questions about authority, about the relations between men and women in the work, and about how decisions would be made. Amy remained the undisputed head. She had founded the work, and she ran it. But she had now to lead men as well as women, and some of the men who came were strong characters with their own ideas.

Bringing Up Boys

Amy had firm ideas about how boys should be brought up. She wanted them to be strong, brave and hard-working, and she believed in plenty of outdoor activity, practical work and adventure. She wanted them to learn trades and farming, so that they could support themselves when they grew up, rather than depending on the mission for jobs. She wanted them to be Christians who could stand on their own feet in Indian society, not dependants of a foreign institution.

She also guarded them as closely as she guarded the girls. The danger that had brought them to Dohnavur did not disappear when they arrived, and she was determined that no boy in her care should be exposed to the influences she had fought against. That meant a protected life, inside the compound, with limited contact with the world outside. As with the girls, the protection was real and necessary in the early years. As with the girls, some observers would later wonder whether it went on longer and further than it needed to.

A Brigand

The boys were not the only lost sons whom Amy met in these years. In the early 1920s the countryside around Dohnavur was disturbed by a band of outlaws, led by a man whom Amy would call Raj. By her account he had

been driven to the hills by injustice and persecution, and he had become a kind of Robin Hood, feared by the police and the rich and admired by many of the poor. In the course of his years as a fugitive he came into contact with the Fellowship, and Amy came to know him. He listened to the gospel, and she believed that he came to a real faith in Christ.

She urged him to give himself up and face the courts, and for a time there seemed to be hope that he might do so. It did not happen. Raj was killed by the police not long afterwards, and Amy was left to grieve for a man she had come to regard as a brother in Christ, and to face the suspicion of those who thought the mission had been too friendly with a criminal. She told his story in a book published in 1927 under the title *Raj, Brigand Chief*. The details of his life and death are known chiefly from her account, and they should be read with that in mind. But the story shows something about her that is easy to miss: that her compassion was not limited to small children, and that she was willing to risk her reputation for the sake of a hunted man.

Where He Is

The verse at the head of this chapter comes from the story of Hagar and Ishmael in the wilderness. Driven out of Abraham's household, with the water gone, Hagar laid her son under a bush and went a little way off, because she could not bear to watch him die. And God heard the voice of the lad. The angel's words are some of the most tender in Genesis: "fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is."

Where he is: not where he ought to be, or where he might have been, but in the wilderness, under a bush, dying of thirst. God heard him there. Amy Carmichael believed that God heard the cries of children wherever they were, including the boys whom nobody else seemed to notice, and that

she had been called to be one of the means by which he answered. It took her six years to see how. But when the first boy came, she believed that God had heard, and that the waiting had not been wasted.

By the end of her life the boys' side of the family had grown into a large company, and many of those who passed through it grew up to be teachers, farmers, craftsmen, nurses and Christian workers. Some stayed at Dohnavur and worked in the Fellowship; others went out into the wider world. The boys' work is less famous than the girls', and it is often left out of popular accounts of Amy Carmichael's life. But it was, in its way, as remarkable an act of faith, and it was born out of six years of patient prayer.

A Fellowship and Its Cost

"And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul: and not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common."
— Acts 4:32, ASV

Sisters of the Common Life

In March 1916, in the middle of the war and the year after Ponnammal's death, Amy Carmichael gathered a small group of the Indian women who worked with her into a fellowship she called the Sisters of the Common Life. The name was borrowed from a late medieval movement in the Low Countries, the Brethren and Sisters of the Common Life, from which had come Thomas à Kempis and *The Imitation of Christ*. Amy did not intend to found a religious order in the Catholic sense. There were no lifelong vows. But the Sisters committed themselves to a life of simplicity, prayer and service at Dohnavur, and to remaining unmarried for as long as they felt called to it, so that they could give themselves wholly to the children.

It was a remarkable step for a Protestant missionary in South India. In a society where marriage was almost universal for women, and where an unmarried woman was regarded as an anomaly, Amy was offering Indian Christian women a recognised way of life outside marriage, with dignity and purpose. Many of those who joined were women who had come out of

Hindu homes, or who had grown up at Dohnavur, and for whom marriage within the Christian community was not always easy to arrange. For them the Sisters offered a family and a calling.

It also raised questions. Some Indian Christians, and some missionaries, were uneasy about a Protestant community of unmarried women under a foreign leader, and wondered whether it was healthy for young women to be encouraged not to marry. Amy was clear that she did not regard singleness as superior to marriage, and that the girls who grew up at Dohnavur were free to marry if they chose. Many did. But she believed that some were called to a single life of service, as she had been, and she wanted to give that calling a shape.

Leaving the Society

For nearly thirty years Amy had worked in India as a missionary of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, though in practice she had long run her own work with a great deal of independence. As Dohnavur grew, the arrangement became more awkward. The Fellowship included workers of many denominations, men as well as women, and Indians as well as Europeans. It had its own principles, its own way of life, and its own leader. It made no appeals for money, while the Society, like all mission societies, depended on them. Amy did not wish to be bound by the rules and decisions of a committee in London that knew little of Dohnavur.

In 1925 the connection with the Society was ended by agreement, and Dohnavur became fully independent. In 1927 it was registered as the Dohnavur Fellowship, with its own constitution and its own governing structure. Amy remained its leader, and it was clear to everyone that the Fellowship was, in large measure, what she made it.

The independence had obvious advantages. Dohnavur could follow its own principles without compromise, and Amy was free to lead as she believed God was leading her. But it also had costs. An independent work, led by a strong founder, without outside oversight, was vulnerable to the weaknesses of its leader. Decisions that might have been questioned by a committee were not questioned. And the question of what would happen when the founder died, always a hard one for such works, became more pressing.

Stephen Neill

The most painful episode of these years, and one that Amy never mentioned in her own history of the Fellowship, involved a young man who would later become one of the best-known missionary scholars of the century. Stephen Neill was a brilliant young Cambridge graduate, a fellow of Trinity College, who came to India in 1924 to work at Dohnavur. His parents, both doctors, came out too for a time. He had read Amy's books, and he came, it seems, with high hopes of working under her.

The partnership did not last. Within a year or so Neill and Amy were at odds, and in November 1925 he left Dohnavur. The reasons are not entirely clear, and the surviving accounts reflect the views of the people who gave them. A historian who has studied the episode, Dyron Daughrity, has described it as a bitter parting. It seems that Neill disagreed with Amy over the treatment and upbringing of the boys, including the degree to which they should be allowed outside the compound, and that he did not easily submit to her authority. Amy, for her part, seems to have felt that he was undermining the work and the unity of the Fellowship. Neill's mother blamed the friction partly on Amy's religious outlook, and Neill himself, in

an autobiography published after his death, wrote critically of his time at Dohnavur.

Neill went on to a distinguished career. He became bishop of Tinnevelly, the very diocese in which Dohnavur lay, and later one of the most respected historians of Christian missions in the world. The episode tells us something about both of them. Neill was young, gifted and sure of himself, and he may have been difficult to manage. Amy was a strong leader who did not easily share authority, and who could not always distinguish disagreement from disloyalty. A wiser handling on both sides might have kept him. Amy's silence about him in *Gold Cord*, her own history of the Fellowship, suggests that the wound went deep.

Healing

One of the needs that Amy had prayed about for many years was a hospital. The children of Dohnavur were often ill, and so were the people of the villages around. The nearest proper medical care was far away, and many children had died who might have lived with better treatment. With the coming of doctors and nurses to the Fellowship, the hope of a hospital became a reality. By the end of the 1920s the Fellowship had its own hospital, which Amy named, in Tamil, the Place of Heavenly Healing. It served not only the Fellowship but the surrounding villages, Hindu and Christian alike, and it became one of the most valued parts of Dohnavur's work.

The hospital was also, in Amy's eyes, a place of witness. She wanted the people who came for treatment to see the love of Christ in the care they received, and to hear the gospel if they wished. She was careful that no one should be pressured, and that treatment should never depend on

willingness to listen. But she believed that healing of the body and healing of the soul belonged together, as they had in the ministry of Jesus.

Books from Dohnavur

Through all these years Amy went on writing. Her books were one of the main ways in which friends at home learned about Dohnavur, and since the Fellowship made no appeals, they were also, without being designed for it, one of the ways in which friends came to share in its life. In 1922 she published a life of Thomas Ragland, the Cambridge scholar who had pioneered itinerant evangelism in the villages of North Tinnevelly in the 1850s, and whose letter about the worth of a single soul she had quoted twenty years earlier. In 1924 came *Mimosa*, the story of a girl from a Hindu family who spent only a short time at Dohnavur as a child, heard there that God loved her, and went home to hold on to that one truth for years with almost no Christian teaching at all. The book is a quiet one, and many readers have found it among her most moving. It is a story about the power of a little light, and about the faithfulness of God to a child whom no missionary could follow.

She also wrote songs, many of them in Tamil, for the children to sing, and verse in English, some of which was gathered into books. Her writing in these years became more devotional and less polemical than *Things as They Are*. She was writing less to rouse readers at home than to strengthen those who were already committed, inside and outside the Fellowship, and to set down what she had learned about prayer, suffering and obedience. That shift would become even more marked after 1931, when writing became, for a time, almost the only work she could do.

One Heart and Soul

The verse at the head of this chapter describes the earliest church in Jerusalem: "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul," and they held their possessions in common. It is an ideal that Christians have tried again and again to live out, in monasteries and religious orders, in communities and households, and it has never been easy.

Amy Carmichael tried to live it at Dohnavur. The Fellowship owned its property in common, its members received no salaries, and they shared a life of work and prayer. Unity was one of her great concerns. She wanted the Fellowship to be of one heart and soul, and she believed that disunity was one of the most dangerous threats to its life. That concern lay behind much of her strictness, and behind her difficulty with people like Stephen Neill who did not fit.

The ideal was a good one, and it produced a community of rare devotion. But the danger of such an ideal is that unity can come to mean uniformity, and that the leader's will can come to be identified with the will of God. Amy was not blind to this danger, and she warned against it. But she did not always escape it. The story of the Fellowship in these years is the story of a remarkable community, held together by love and by a powerful leader, and it is also a reminder that even the best communities need ways of hearing those who disagree.

The Pit at Kalakadu

"But he knoweth the way that I take; When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold."
— Job 23:10, ASV

Sixty-Three

By 1931 Amy Carmichael was sixty-three years old. She had been in India for thirty-six years, without once going home. The household that had begun with one runaway child had become a Fellowship of several hundred people, with nurseries, schools, workshops, a boys' compound and a hospital. She was still its leader, and she was still active: walking the compound, visiting the nurseries, teaching, writing, counselling, praying, and making decisions large and small. Her neuralgia still troubled her, and she was no longer young, but she was far from an invalid.

She was also thinking about the future. The Fellowship was growing, and new work was opening. Her biographers record that in the autumn of 1931 she prayed, as she had often prayed before, that God would do with her whatever would best fit her for his service. It was the kind of prayer that the Keswick tradition encouraged, a prayer of full surrender, and she meant it. She had no way of knowing how it would be answered.

India in 1931

The India around Dohnavur was changing fast. In 1930 Mahatma Gandhi had led the Salt March to the sea, and the movement for independence had become a mass movement that no British government could ignore. Round Table conferences were meeting in London to discuss India's constitutional future. In the Madras Legislative Council, Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy's bill to end the dedication of girls to temples had been introduced, but she had resigned her seat in 1930 in protest at Gandhi's arrest, and the bill lay dormant for years. The old world of the Raj, in which Amy had lived her whole Indian life, was beginning to pass away.

Amy was not a political person, and she said little in public about these great events. She was a British subject who had lived her whole working life under British rule, and she shared many of the assumptions of her generation about it. But she had also spent thirty-six years building a community that was meant to be Indian, in which Indian men and women held real responsibility. Whatever she thought of the politics, the future of the Fellowship would lie in Indian hands, and she knew it.

24 October 1931

On 24 October 1931 Amy went to look at a building that was being prepared for the Fellowship's work, in the town of Kalakadu, a few miles from Dohnavur according to her biographers. It was dusk, and the light was poor. Workmen had dug a pit in the floor of one of the rooms, for a latrine, in a place where it should not have been, and it had not been covered or marked. Amy, walking through the building in the half-dark, stepped into it and fell.

The injuries were severe. She broke her leg, dislocated her ankle, and injured her spine. She was carried back to Dohnavur in great pain. At first it was expected that she would recover in a matter of weeks or months, as people do from broken legs, and that she would soon be walking the compound again. That did not happen. The fractures healed badly, the spinal injury left lasting damage, and arthritis set in. Combined with the old neuralgia, the effects of the fall left her largely confined to her room for the rest of her life. She lived for almost twenty more years, and for most of that time she could walk only a little, with help, and was often in pain.

Some popular accounts place the fall at Dohnavur itself, at a building site for the new hospital or for a house in the compound. The details vary, and they do not much matter. What matters is that a woman who had been the active centre of a large community for thirty years was suddenly, and as it turned out permanently, laid aside.

She was settled in a room in her own bungalow at Dohnavur, with a window onto a small garden. Outside it, in time, a bird-bath was placed, so that she could watch the birds that came to drink and bathe. She had always loved birds, and they became one of the pleasures of her confinement. The children came to see her, and the members of the Fellowship came for counsel and prayer. The room became, in a sense, the heart of Dohnavur. But it was a heart that could no longer go out to the rest of the body.

An Answer to Prayer?

It is natural to connect the fall with the prayer she had prayed, and many of those who have told her story have done so. She had asked God to do whatever would fit her for his service, and within a short time she was crippled. Was this the answer?

Amy herself came to believe that it was, in the sense that God had allowed it and would use it. She did not believe that God had pushed her into the pit, or that suffering was good in itself. But she believed that nothing came to her except through his hands, and that what came through his hands could be received as a gift, however hard. In the years that followed she wrote a great deal about suffering, about acceptance, and about the hidden purposes of God in pain, and much of it grew directly out of her own experience in that room.

It is worth being careful here, as she was. There is a kind of Christian talk about suffering that makes it too easy: that treats every disaster as a lesson, every illness as a blessing in disguise, and every unanswered prayer as part of a neat plan. Amy did not talk like that, at least not in her better moments. She admitted that she did not understand. She admitted that the pain was real and that it wore her down. She admitted that she longed to be up and about, and that the confinement was hard to bear. What she affirmed was not that she understood, but that she trusted. The verse from Job at the head of this chapter says, "he knoweth the way that I take." It does not say that Job knew it. Job's comfort was not understanding but being known.

The Fellowship prayed for her healing, and so did friends all over the world. The prayer was not answered in the way they asked. Amy had prayed many such prayers herself, for Ponnammal, for babies in the nurseries, for converts in danger, and she knew that "no" is also an answer. The child who had stood at a mirror in Millisle, disappointed to find her eyes still brown, now lay in a room in Dohnavur and learned the same lesson again, at much greater cost.

Losing Control

For a woman like Amy Carmichael, the hardest part of the fall may have been not the pain but the loss of control. She had always been the one who acted, who decided, who went to the nursery when a baby was ill, who walked down to the boys' compound to settle a problem, who saw everything with her own eyes. Now she could see almost nothing except her own room and the garden outside its window. She had to depend on others to tell her what was happening, and to carry out her decisions.

That forced a change in the way the Fellowship was led. Others took on more and more of the daily work of leadership: the senior Indian and British members, among them Godfrey Webb-Peploe in the boys' work and the doctors in the hospital. Amy remained the head of the Fellowship, consulted on everything and deciding the most important matters, and her authority was not diminished. But she could no longer be everywhere, and the Fellowship had to learn to work without her constant presence.

In the long run that was good for it. A work that depends entirely on one person is fragile, and Dohnavur would have to survive her death. The twenty years of her confinement gave others the experience and the authority they would need. Whether Amy saw it that way at the time is less clear. She found it hard to let go, and those around her sometimes found it hard to act without her.

Gold

Job's words at the head of this chapter end with a promise: "When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." The image is of a refiner's fire, in which gold is heated until the impurities rise to the surface and can be skimmed away. The fire does not destroy the gold; it purifies it.

It is the same image that had confronted Amy as a girl beside the fountain in Belfast, when the words about gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay and stubble came to her, and she learned that the fire would test what she had built. Now, at sixty-three, she was in the fire herself. What would come out of it?

The answer, as the next chapter will show, was a great deal. Out of the room to which she was confined came many of her most enduring books, a stream of letters to people all over the world, and a ministry of prayer and counsel that reached far beyond Dohnavur. Those who knew her in her last years spoke of a gentleness and a tenderness that had not always been so evident in the active years. The fire had done its work. But it would be wrong to pretend that it was easy, or that she did not feel it. Gold does not choose the furnace.

A Room at Dohnavur

"And he hath said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my power is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."
— 2 Corinthians 12:9, ASV

Twenty Years in a Room

For the last twenty years of her life, Amy Carmichael lived mostly in one room. It was not a sickroom in the gloomy Victorian sense. It had a window onto a garden, a bird-bath outside where she could watch the birds, books, flowers, and a constant coming and going of children and members of the Fellowship. But it was a room she could rarely leave. She was often in pain. She slept badly. There were long periods when she was too ill to do much at all. And she was aware, all the time, of the life of the Fellowship going on outside, in places she could no longer reach.

She did not waste those years. Out of that room came a stream of writing that has outlasted almost everything else she did, at least in the knowledge of the wider Christian world. And out of it came also a ministry of prayer, counsel and encouragement that held the Fellowship together and reached thousands of people far beyond it.

Gold Cord

The first major book she wrote after her fall was *Gold Cord*, published in 1932. It was her own history of the Dohnavur Fellowship, from Preena's coming to the early 1930s. The title came from an image she loved: a cord of gold that bound the members of the Fellowship to God and to one another, made of many strands twisted together. The book is not a full or impartial history. It leaves out much, including, as we have seen, the episode with Stephen Neill, and it tells the story as Amy saw it, as an unfolding of God's faithfulness. But it is the single most important source for the inner life of Dohnavur, and it shows the Fellowship as its founder wanted it to be seen.

It also shows how much she had come to depend on the community. The book is full of other people: the accals, the Sisters, the doctors and nurses, the boys' workers, the children themselves. Amy was its narrator, but she was not its hero. She wanted the reader to see a family, held together by a golden cord, and not a missionary surrounded by admirers.

Books for the Suffering

In 1933 she published *Rose from Brier*, a book of letters and meditations for people who were ill or in pain. It grew out of notes she had written to patients in the Dohnavur hospital and to others who were suffering, and out of her own experience in the years since her fall. She had noticed, she said, that most books of comfort for the sick were written by people who were well, and that they often missed their mark. She wanted to write as one sufferer to another, honestly, without pretending that pain was easy or that faith made it painless.

The book was widely read, and it brought her letters from all over the world from people in hospitals and sickrooms who felt that she understood. She answered many of them. In the years that followed she wrote other books of meditation, verse and counsel, some drawn from the notes she wrote almost daily to members of the Fellowship. Many of these were collected and published after her death.

Notes and Letters

Much of what Amy wrote in these years was never meant for publication at all. Unable to walk the compound, she kept in touch with the members of the Fellowship by writing to them: short notes, often daily, sent across the compound by hand, offering a verse, a word of encouragement, a gentle rebuke, or simply a greeting. Members kept these notes, sometimes for decades, and many of them were later gathered into books. They show a leader who knew her people well and cared about the smallest details of their lives, and who could be tender and funny as well as searching.

She also wrote to friends and strangers outside the Fellowship, many of whom had written to her because of her books. Some were missionaries in difficulty; some were ill; some were young people trying to discern a call. She could not answer them all, but she answered many, and those letters carried her influence far beyond Dohnavur. A whole generation of evangelical missionaries, especially women, grew up reading her, and some of them went to the field because of her. Among her readers was a schoolgirl in America named Elisabeth Howard, who would later, as Elisabeth Elliot, write her life.

All of this was done from a bed or a chair, often through pain, and often on days when she could manage only a few lines. It was not the work she would have chosen. But it was work, and she did it faithfully.

If

The best known of all her books is a small one, published in 1938, with a one-word title: *If*. It grew, by the usual account, out of a conversation with a fellow worker about a difficulty in the Fellowship, and about what it means to love as Christ loved. Amy went away and wrote down, one after another, a series of short sentences, each beginning with the word "if," each describing some small failure of love, and each ending with the same refrain, which measures that failure against the love of Calvary.

The sentences are searching, and they are meant to be. They do not deal with great sins but with small ones: irritation, sarcasm, self-pity, the wish to be noticed, the readiness to talk about another person's faults, the reluctance to forgive. They hold up each of these against the love shown on the cross, and they leave the reader, as they left the writer, with nowhere to hide. Amy wrote them first for herself and her Fellowship, and she was aware that they condemned her as much as anyone. Their power lies partly in that. They are not the words of a saint looking down on sinners, but of a woman who knew her own temper, pride and impatience, and who had learned in the furnace of pain how much she still had to learn about love.

The book is still in print and still widely read, and it is, for many Christians, the only thing of Amy Carmichael's they know. Its sentences are not quoted here, out of respect for the rights that may still attach to them; readers should find them in her own words.

Arulai

The years in the room brought further losses. The members of the first generation, those who had been with Amy from the Pannaivilai days, were growing old and dying. The hardest of these losses was Arulai, the girl

convert who had grown into one of the leaders of the Fellowship, and on whom Amy had come to rely more than on almost anyone. Arulai died, after a long illness, in 1939. Amy grieved for her as she had grieved for Ponnammal, and she felt the loss of an Indian leader whom she had hoped would carry the Fellowship into the future.

The Second World War followed. India was drawn into it, and in 1942 Japanese forces advanced through Burma towards India's eastern frontier, and Japanese ships and aircraft raided the eastern coast. For a time there was real fear in South India. Supplies were short, prices rose, and contact with friends in Britain was disrupted. The Fellowship carried on, as it had through the First World War, trusting God for its needs. Amy, in her room, prayed and wrote and led.

Independence and the Act

In August 1947 India became independent. Amy Carmichael had lived her whole Indian life under British rule, and now she saw it end. She did not leave, as many British people did. Dohnavur was her home, and the Fellowship had long been preparing for a future in which Indians would lead it. In the years that followed, Indian members took on more and more responsibility, and the Fellowship, like the Indian churches around it, adjusted to life in a new nation.

Two months later, in October 1947, the Madras Legislature passed the Madras Devadasis (Prevention of Dedication) Act, which made it illegal to dedicate girls to temples in the Madras Presidency. It was the culmination of decades of campaigning by Indian reformers, above all Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy, and it was passed by an Indian government in the first weeks of independence. Amy had spent nearly half a century working to protect children from the practice it outlawed. She lived to see it ended

in law, though she knew that law alone would not end it in practice everywhere. Some popular accounts give the date of the act as 1948, and some give Amy the credit for it. Neither is quite right. The act was passed in 1947, and it was the work of Indian legislators. But it is not wrong to see her long witness as one of the many streams that fed it.

Power Made Perfect in Weakness

The verse at the head of this chapter is Paul's account of what he learned when he asked three times to be freed from what he called a thorn in the flesh, and was refused. "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my power is made perfect in weakness." Paul's response was not resignation but a strange kind of boasting: "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

Amy Carmichael knew that verse, and in her last twenty years she lived it. She had asked for healing, and she had not been healed. She had been an active, strong-willed leader, and she had been made weak. But out of that weakness came the books by which most of the world now knows her, a deepened gentleness that those around her noticed, and a Fellowship that learned to stand on its own. She did not pretend that weakness was pleasant. But she found, as Paul had found, that it was a place where the power of Christ could rest.

God's Garden

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit."
— John 12:24, ASV

18 January 1951

Amy Carmichael died at Dohnavur on 18 January 1951. She was eighty-three years old. She had lived in India for fifty-five years, and for the last nineteen of them she had been largely confined to her room. Her final illness was long, and in her last months she was very weak and often not fully conscious. Those who cared for her were members of the family she had built: Indian and British women and men who had grown up at Dohnavur or come to join it, and who had learned from her what it meant to give their lives for others.

She had left instructions about her funeral and her grave. She did not want a monument. She did not want a stone with her name and dates and a list of her achievements. She was buried in the Fellowship's own burial ground, which was known as God's Garden, among the children and workers who had gone before her. Over the grave the Fellowship placed a bird-bath, like the one she had watched from her window for twenty years, and on it they inscribed a single word: *Amma*.

It was exactly right. She had been called many things in her life: Miss Carmichael, Miss Wilson-Carmichael, the Missie Ammal, the child-stealing Ammal, the founder of the Dohnavur Fellowship. But the name that mattered to her, and to the people who loved her, was the one the children had given her. She had been their mother.

The Fellowship After Her

The great test of any work built around a strong founder is what happens when the founder dies. Many such works decline or collapse, because no one can take the founder's place and the community cannot agree on how to go on without her. Amy had thought about this for many years, and the twenty years of her confinement had given others the experience they needed to lead. The Dohnavur Fellowship survived her death, and it continues today.

It has changed, as it was bound to. Indian leadership, which Amy had long intended, became complete. The temple dedication that first brought children to Dohnavur was outlawed, and the needs of the children and families it serves have changed with the times. The Fellowship today works in Tamil Nadu with children and families, offering care, education and medical help in a Christian setting, on the land at the foot of the mountains where Amy lived. The hospital still serves the villages around. The work is smaller in some respects and different in many, but it is recognisably the same family.

The Books

Amy Carmichael's books have also outlived her. Many of them are still in print, and they continue to be read by Christians all over the world,

especially those drawn to her teaching on prayer, suffering, obedience and love. *If* remains the best known. *Gold Cord* and *Rose from Brier* are still read. The early books, *Things as They Are* and *Lotus Buds* among them, are now in the public domain, and they are read today both as Christian classics and as historical documents of missionary life in South India at the turn of the twentieth century.

Her influence on later missionaries has been considerable. A generation of women missionaries, in particular, found in her an example of a single woman who did serious and lasting work, who refused to be confined to the roles that missionary societies expected of women, and who wrote about the cost of discipleship without sentimentality. Elisabeth Elliot, whose life is told in the previous volume of this series, was one of them, and her biography of Amy Carmichael introduced her to a new generation of readers in the 1980s.

Remembered at Home

She never went back to Ireland, but Ireland has not forgotten her. In Belfast the congregation that grew from the Welcome Hall still meets off the Shankill Road, and it has opened a centre in her name where visitors can learn her story. The Ulster History Circle, which marks the places associated with notable people from the north of Ireland, has honoured her with one of its blue plaques. In Millisle, the village by the sea where she was born, her name is known and her story is told. It is a modest kind of fame, and she would probably have disliked it. But it is a reminder that the woman who became Amma to the children of a Tamil village began as the eldest daughter of a miller in County Down, and that the faith she carried to India was first given to her there.

She is remembered in other places too, often in small ways: in the names of schools and mission houses, in hymnbooks that include her verses, and in the private libraries of Christians who keep her books by their beds. The memory that would have mattered most to her, though, is the one kept at Dohnavur, among the people who still call that place home.

Weighing the Life

A biography that has tried to be honest throughout should try to be honest at the end. How should Amy Carmichael's life be weighed?

On one side, the achievements are great. She gave half a century to the care of children whom almost nobody else would take, and she gave them not only food and shelter but a home, a family, an education and a faith. Hundreds of children, perhaps more than a thousand in all over the years, grew up at Dohnavur who might otherwise have faced lives of exploitation, neglect or early death. She did it without salary, without appeals, and without ever going home. She built a community that has outlasted her by more than seventy years. And she wrote books that have helped many thousands of Christians to pray, to endure suffering, and to love more truly.

On the other side, there are shadows, and this book has tried not to hide them. Her writing about Hinduism was often harsh and sometimes unfair, and it contributed to a picture of Indian religion and of the women of the temple communities that did harm. She ran Dohnavur with an authority that some found overbearing, and she did not easily share power or tolerate disagreement, as the episode with Stephen Neill shows. The protective walls of Dohnavur, necessary in the early years, may have stayed high longer than they needed to, and some of the children who grew up there found it hard to make their way in the world outside. She was a woman of her time and her empire, and she shared some of its blind spots.

Those shadows are real, and they should not be explained away. But they do not cancel the light. Every human life, including every Christian life, is a mixture of faithfulness and failure, insight and blindness, love and self-will. The question is not whether Amy Carmichael was perfect, but whether she was faithful, and whether God worked through her. On both counts the answer seems clear.

A Grain of Wheat

The verse at the head of this chapter was spoken by Jesus in the last week of his life, when some Greeks came asking to see him. He answered with a saying about a grain of wheat: unless it falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He was speaking first of himself, and of the death he was about to die. But he went on at once to speak of his followers: "He that loveth his life loseth it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal" (John 12:25, ASV).

Amy Carmichael took that saying as a pattern for her life. The phrase most often associated with her, that missionary life is simply a chance to die, is an echo of it. She did not mean that missionaries should seek death, or despise life. She meant that the missionary's calling is to let go of self: of comfort, of home, of reputation, of control, of the life one would have chosen. She let go of a great deal. She let go of Belfast and the Welcome Hall, of Robert Wilson and Broughton Grange, of Japan and the village work she loved, of her mother, of her health, and finally of her active leadership. Each time, something died. And each time, she believed, something grew.

Amma

This book began with a verse about a shepherd who leaves ninety-nine sheep to look for one that is lost, and with the words of Jesus: "it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." It is fitting to end there.

Amy Carmichael's great work began with one child. Preena did not come to Dohnavur as part of a programme or a strategy. She came because she had heard that there was a woman who took children in, and she walked through the dark to find her. Amy took her in, at some risk, because she believed that this one child mattered to God. Everything else followed from that: the nurseries, the boys' compound, the hospital, the Fellowship, the books. But it began with one.

The bird-bath over her grave in God's Garden bears one word, and it is not her name. It is the name that one runaway child, and hundreds after her, gave to the woman who opened the door. Amy Carmichael would not have wanted to be remembered as a heroine, a saint, or a legend. She would have wanted to be remembered, if at all, as a mother, and as a witness to the Father who does not will that one of these little ones should perish. That is how she is remembered at Dohnavur still.

Appendix a: Lessons from the Life of Amy Carmichael

> *"Remember them that had the rule over you, men that spake unto you the word of God; and considering the issue of their life, imitate their faith."*
> *— Hebrews 13:7, ASV*

The lessons below gather up the themes of this book so that readers can return to them. Amy Carmichael would not have wanted her life to be a pattern. She would have wanted it to point beyond herself to the God who, she believed, had led her every step of the way. Each lesson therefore rests on Scripture, not on her example alone. The letter to the Hebrews tells us to consider how those who went before us lived and died, and to imitate their faith, not every detail of their lives. Some of the lessons below come from her failures as well as her faithfulness.

1. No Is Also an Answer

The child who prayed for blue eyes learned that God hears every prayer, and that he is free to say no. She learned the same lesson again in a sickroom sixty years later. "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt understand hereafter" (John 13:7, ASV).

2. Faith Must Become One's Own

Amy grew up in a home full of faith, but at fifteen, at a children's mission in Harrogate, she received the love of God for herself. "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jeremiah 31:3, ASV).

3. Build With What Will Last

An old woman's bundle, carried through the streets of Belfast, taught her that respectability is stubble and love is gold. "The fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is" (1 Corinthians 3:13, ASV).

4. Christ Is the Keeper

At a convention in Glasgow she learned that the Christian life is not a strain after holiness but a trust in the one who is able to keep us. "Now unto him that is able to guard you from stumbling ... be glory" (Jude 24-25, ASV).

5. Go Where the Poor Are

She built a hall for girls too poor to wear hats, and lived in a slum to be near the mill girls of Manchester. "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor" (Luke 14:21, ASV).

6. God Sets the Solitary in Families

An old Quaker took her into his home when she was worn out, and she spent her life doing the same for children with nowhere to go. "God setteth the solitary in families" (Psalm 68:6, ASV).

7. A Shut Door Is Not a Withdrawn Call

The China Inland Mission turned her down, her health failed in Japan, and she was called home from Ceylon. She went on believing that she had been sent. “Trust in Jehovah with all thy heart, And lean not upon thine own understanding” (Proverbs 3:5, ASV).

8. Do Not Let Your Clothes Get in the Way

A pair of fur gloves taught her that foreign habits can distract from the gospel. She wore a kimono in Japan and a sari in India. “I am become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some” (1 Corinthians 9:22, ASV).

9. Faithfulness, Not Success

Most days in the villages ended as they began. She held on to the text that says stewards must be found faithful, and thanked God that it did not say successful. “Here, moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful” (1 Corinthians 4:2, ASV).

10. Tell the Truth

Things as They Are told readers at home what they did not want to hear. Honesty about the cost and slowness of the work was, she believed, the foundation of true prayer. “For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth” (2 Corinthians 13:8, ASV).

11. Speak Fairly of Those You Oppose

Her writing about Hinduism was often harsh, and it gave real offence. A Christian witness is weakened, not strengthened, by caricature of others' faith. "But speaking truth in love, may grow up in all things into him, who is the head, even Christ" (Ephesians 4:15, ASV).

12. Count the Cost, and Do Not Hide It

Converts in caste India often lost home, family and inheritance. She did not hide that cost from them or from her readers. "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23, ASV).

13. One Child Matters

Her great work began with a single runaway girl who climbed onto her knee. "Whosoever shall receive one of such little children in my name, receiveth me" (Mark 9:37, ASV).

14. Speak for Those Who Cannot Speak

She gave her life to protecting children whose futures had been decided for them before they could understand. "Open thy mouth for the dumb, In the cause of all such as are left desolate" (Proverbs 31:8, ASV).

15. Honour Those Who Fought Beside You

The end of temple dedication was won above all by Indian reformers. Christians should be glad to honour the good done by others, and slow to

claim credit for themselves. “Love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up” (1 Corinthians 13:4, ASV).

16. Let the Plan Go

She came to India to preach in the villages, and found herself caring for babies. She let her own plan go and took the work God gave her. “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might” (Ecclesiastes 9:10, ASV).

17. Wait for God’s Time

She prayed for six years about the boys before the first boy came. “Wait for Jehovah: Be strong, and let thy heart take courage; Yea, wait thou for Jehovah” (Psalm 27:14, ASV).

18. Tell Your Needs to God

Dohnavur made no appeals for money and testified that it never lacked what it needed. Those who follow her in this should beware of asking by not asking. “And my God shall supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19, ASV).

19. Lead Without Lording It

Her strength built Dohnavur, and her difficulty in sharing authority cost it Stephen Neill and caused others pain. “Neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves ensamples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:3, ASV).

20. In Christ There Is No Caste

At Dohnavur children of every community ate, slept and prayed together as sisters and brothers. “There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye all are one man in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28, ASV).

21. Weakness Is Not Wasted

Twenty years in a room produced her most enduring books and a deeper gentleness. “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9, ASV).

22. Love Is Tested in Small Things

Her best-known book measures small failures of love against the love of Calvary. “Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not ... seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil” (1 Corinthians 13:4-5, ASV).

23. Except a Grain of Wheat Die

She let go of home, work, health and control, and believed that each letting go bore fruit. “Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit” (John 12:24, ASV).

24. Be Remembered as Love

Over her grave there is no name, only the word the children gave her. The greatest honour a Christian can receive is to have loved well. “Greater love

hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13, ASV).

Appendix B: Chapter-by-Chapter Study and Reflection Guide

"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves."
— James 1:22, ASV

This guide is for personal reflection, small groups, or a reading course of about twenty-four weeks. Its purpose is not to make Amy Carmichael an object of admiration, but to let her life hold up a mirror in which readers can examine their own discipleship under Scripture. Groups may find it helpful to begin each session with the chapter's opening verse and to end with prayer. Some chapters, especially those on *Things as They Are* and on temple dedication, raise hard questions about mission, culture and the way Christians speak of other faiths. They are meant to be discussed honestly and charitably, not settled quickly.

Introduction - The Legend and Her Own Books

Central idea

The real Amy Carmichael, as her own books and the record show her, is more instructive than the legend that has grown around her.

Scriptures to revisit

2 Corinthians 13:8; John 8:32.

Reflection

1. Which stories about Christian heroes have you heard that may have grown in the telling? 2. Why does it matter whether a story is accurate, if it inspires?

Chapter 1 - Brown Eyes

Central idea

A strong-willed child in a home of faith learned that God hears every prayer and is free to say no.

Scriptures to revisit

Psalm 139:13-14; Matthew 7:9-11.

Reflection

1. Can you remember a prayer that was answered with no? How did you receive it? 2. What did your own upbringing give you that you still use?

Chapter 2 - Harrogate

Central idea

At fifteen, at a children's mission, a girl who had always known about Christ received his love for herself.

Scriptures to revisit

Jeremiah 31:3; Mark 10:13-16.

Reflection

1. When did faith become your own, rather than your parents'? 2. How seriously does your church take the faith of children?

Chapter 3 - Gold, Silver, Costly Stones

Central idea

A moment of embarrassment in a Belfast street and a prayer in a Glasgow hall gave her a direction and a source of strength.

Scriptures to revisit

1 Corinthians 3:10-15; Jude 24-25.

Reflection

1. What are you building with your life, and how will it stand the fire? 2. Where does fear of others' opinion keep you from doing good?

Chapter 4 - The Shawlies

Central idea

She went out to the mill girls the churches overlooked and built them a hall called the Welcome.

Scriptures to revisit

Luke 14:15-24; James 2:1-9.

Reflection

1. Who are the "shawlies" of your town? 2. What would it take for them to feel truly welcome in your church?

Chapter 5 - The Dear Old Man

Central idea

Broken in health in Manchester, she was taken into Robert Wilson's home and given a new family.

Scriptures to revisit

Psalm 68:5-6; Ruth 1:16-17.

Reflection

1. Who has been a spiritual father or mother to you? 2. How might you set someone solitary in a family?

Chapter 6 - "Go Ye"

Central idea

A familiar command became a personal call, and it cost her mother and Robert Wilson as much as it cost her.

Scriptures to revisit

Mark 16:15; Luke 14:25-33.

Reflection

1. How do you discern between a call from God and your own desire? 2. What does it cost those who love us when we obey God?

Chapter 7 - Sunrise Land

Central idea

Fifteen months in Japan taught her about identification, slowness, and the faithfulness of God in loneliness.

Scriptures to revisit

Psalm 113:3; Psalm 34:22; 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.

Reflection

1. What might be the “fur gloves” in your witness? 2. How do you face the fear of loneliness?

Chapter 8 - A Door Shut, a Door Opened

Central idea

After Ceylon and a summons home, a new society sent her to India, where she would stay for fifty-five years.

Scriptures to revisit

Proverbs 3:5-6; Acts 16:6-10.

Reflection

1. Looking back, can you see guidance in what seemed at the time like false starts? 2. Where do you need to submit your sense of God’s leading to the counsel of others?

Chapter 9 - Bangalore

Central idea

Dismayed by the comfortable life of a missionary station, she resolved not to be pressed into its mould, and found a teacher in Thomas Walker.

Scriptures to revisit

Romans 12:1-2; Philippians 2:5-8.

Reflection

1. Where has the culture around you pressed your faith into its mould? 2. Is it possible to resist one mould only to be pressed into another?

Chapter 10 - The Starry Cluster

Central idea

With a band of Indian women she travelled the villages, and learned that most days end as they began.

Scriptures to revisit

Daniel 12:3; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2.

Reflection

1. How do you keep going when there are no visible results? 2. What is the place of "simple witness" in your life?

Chapter 11 - The Cost of One Soul

Central idea

Converts in caste India often lost everything, and some died young; she believed it was worth it.

Scriptures to revisit

Mark 10:28-31; Matthew 10:34-39.

Reflection

1. What has following Christ cost you? 2. How can Christians honour the grief of families who lose a child to another faith?

Chapter 12 - Pearl-Eyes

Central idea

A runaway child walked through the dark to find the "child-stealing Ammal," and Amy took the risk of keeping her.

Scriptures to revisit

Psalm 10:14-18; Matthew 18:10-14.

Reflection

1. Where do you see God's care in the timing of events in your life? 2. What risks would you take for one child?

Chapter 13 - Dohnavur

Central idea

A village founded as a refuge became the home of a new family, and Amy let her own plan go.

Scriptures to revisit

Psalm 16:5-6; Numbers 35:9-15.

Reflection

1. Have you had to give up a work you loved for one you did not choose? 2. What makes a place a true refuge?

Chapter 14 - Things as They Are

Central idea

Her first India book told the truth about the work, and was both doubted and confirmed.

Scriptures to revisit

2 Corinthians 4:1-2; Ephesians 4:15.

Reflection

1. Why do we prefer encouraging stories to true ones? 2. How would a Hindu reader have felt reading this book, and what can we learn from that?

Chapter 15 - Servants of the Gods

Central idea

The system of temple dedication, its history, its abuses, and the Indian reformers who ended it in law.

Scriptures to revisit

Proverbs 24:11-12; Isaiah 1:17.

Reflection

1. Once we know of an injustice, what is our responsibility? 2. How can Christians oppose an evil without slandering the people caught up in it?

Chapter 16 - Lotus Buds

Central idea

Babies began to come, and the household grew into a family that she loved and delighted in.

Scriptures to revisit

Isaiah 40:11; Mark 10:13-16.

Reflection

1. What can children teach adults about faith? 2. How do you hold together strength and gentleness?

Chapter 17 - Amma

Central idea

She tried to make Dohnavur a home, not an institution, and to give the children Indian lives in Christ.

Scriptures to revisit

1 Thessalonians 2:7-12; Galatians 3:28.

Reflection

1. What is the difference between a home and an institution? 2. Where do strictness and love meet, and where do they part?

Chapter 18 - The Sorrowful Years

Central idea

Between 1912 and 1915 she lost Walker, her mother and Ponnammal, and faced the shadow of the courts.

Scriptures to revisit

John 13:1-7; 2 Corinthians 1:3-7.

Reflection

1. How do you go on when those you depend on are taken? 2. What is the difference between acceptance and resignation?

Chapter 19 - Boys

Central idea

She prayed six years about the boys before the first came, and befriended a hunted outlaw.

Scriptures to revisit

Genesis 21:14-20; Psalm 27:14.

Reflection

1. What have you been praying about for years? 2. Whom are you inclined to write off as beyond help?

Chapter 20 - A Fellowship and Its Cost

Central idea

The Sisters of the Common Life, independence, the hospital, and the painful parting with Stephen Neill.

Scriptures to revisit

Acts 4:32-35; 1 Peter 5:1-5.

Reflection

1. How can a strong community hear those who disagree? 2. Is unity the same as uniformity?

Chapter 21 - The Pit at Kalakadu

Central idea

A fall in 1931 laid her aside for the rest of her life, and forced others to lead.

Scriptures to revisit

Job 23:8-10; Romans 8:28.

Reflection

1. How do you respond when God answers a prayer of surrender in a way you did not expect? 2. What would happen to the work you lead if you were laid aside tomorrow?

Chapter 22 - A Room at Dohnavur

Central idea

From one room came her most lasting books, a ministry of letters, and a gentleness the fire had refined.

Scriptures to revisit

2 Corinthians 12:7-10; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.

Reflection

1. What small failures of love would you have to confess? 2. How can weakness become a place of fruitfulness?

Chapter 23 - God's Garden

Central idea

She died in 1951 and was buried under one word; her life is weighed with its light and its shadows.

Scriptures to revisit

John 12:23-26; Hebrews 13:7.

Reflection

1. What would you want written over your grave? 2. Which part of her faith, not her methods, is God calling you to imitate?

For the Whole Book

Central idea

A life given to one child at a time, with its faithfulness and its failures, points beyond itself to the Father who does not will that one of these little ones should perish.

Scriptures to revisit

Matthew 18:10-14; 2 Corinthians 4:7.

Reflection

1. What has this life taught you about the cost and the joy of following Christ? 2. What one thing will you do differently because you have read it?

Appendix C: Chronology of the Life and Times of Amy Carmichael

> *"So teach us to number our days, That we may get us a heart of wisdom."*
> *— Psalm 90:12, ASV*

The dates below are meant as orientation. Dates given in Amy Carmichael's own early books, or agreed by the main sources, are given plainly. Where the sources disagree, the disagreement is noted. Where a date rests only on the later biographies, it is marked as such.

1820s - Dohnavur Founded

The German missionary Charles Rhenius, of the Church Missionary Society, founds Dohnavur in the Tinnevelly district as a refuge for persecuted converts, named after a Prussian benefactor, Count Dohna.

1859 - The Ulster Revival

A great religious revival sweeps the Presbyterian north of Ireland, shaping the piety of the generation into which Amy is born.

1867 - Birth

Amy Beatrice Carmichael is born on 16 December at Millisle, County Down, the eldest of seven children of David Carmichael, miller, and Catherine Jane Filson. The Children's Special Service Mission is founded the same year.

1875 - The Keswick Convention

Canon T. D. Harford-Battersby and Robert Wilson found the Keswick Convention for the deepening of spiritual life.

c. 1880-1883 - Harrogate

Amy attends a Methodist girls' boarding school in Harrogate, Yorkshire.

1883 - Conversion

At about fifteen she puts her trust in Christ at a children's mission in Harrogate. Some sources give 1882; most give 1883.

c. 1883 - Belfast

The family, whose milling business is in decline, moves to Belfast. Accounts differ on the exact year.

1885 - Her Father's Death

David Carmichael dies, leaving the family in financial difficulty. About this time Amy begins to suffer from neuralgia.

Mid-1880s - The Fountain and the Shawlies

On a Sunday morning in Belfast the words of 1 Corinthians 3:12-14 confront her as she helps an old woman with a bundle. She begins a Sunday class for the shawlies, the mill girls, at Rosemary Street Presbyterian Church.

1886 - Glasgow

At a convention in Glasgow she receives an assurance, from the words of Jude 24, that Christ is able to keep her.

1887 - Keswick

She attends the Keswick Convention and hears Hudson Taylor. She probably first meets Robert Wilson about this time.

1887 or 1889 - The Welcome Hall

An iron hall for the shawlies, paid for by a gift of five hundred pounds, is opened at Cambrai Street, Belfast, and named the Welcome. Some sources give 1887; others give the opening as January 1889.

1889 - Manchester

Amy and her mother move to Manchester to work among mill girls. Amy lives in a poor district, and her health breaks down.

1890 - Broughton Grange

She goes to live with Robert Wilson at Broughton Grange, Cumberland, as his companion and adopted daughter in all but law, and later takes the name Wilson-Carmichael.

1892 - The Call

On 13 January, at Broughton Grange, she becomes convinced that she is called to go overseas. She applies to the China Inland Mission and is rejected on medical grounds. The Keswick Convention agrees to send her as its first missionary.

1893-1894 - Japan

She sails in March 1893 and joins Barclay Buxton's band at Matsue, Japan. She stays about fifteen months, and leaves in the summer of 1894 in poor health.

1894 - Ceylon and Home

A short stay in Ceylon ends when news reaches her late in the year that Robert Wilson has had a stroke. She returns to England by the end of 1894.

1895 - India

From Sunrise Land is published. Accepted by the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, she sails for India in October and arrives at Madras in November. She goes to Bangalore to learn Tamil.

1896 - Tinnevelly

She joins Thomas Walker of the Church Missionary Society and his wife in the Tinnevelly district, first at Palamcottah and then at Pannaivilai.

1897-1901 - The Band

With Ponnammal and other Indian women she travels the villages as an itinerant band. A small number of converts, among them Arulai, join the household. Part of 1900 is spent at Dohnavur.

1901 - Preena

A seven-year-old girl who has run away from a temple household arrives at Pannaivilai; she is brought to Amy, by the usual date, on 7 March. Later that year the household settles at Dohnavur.

1901-1902 - Visitors

Two friends from home visit and persuade her to make her letters into a book.

1903 - Things as They Are

Published in April by Morgan and Scott, with a preface by Eugene Stock; reprinted in August 1903 and in following years. A later edition adds confirmatory notes from missionaries and from Pandita Ramabai.

c. 1904 - Babies

Babies begin to be brought to Dohnavur, and nurseries are built over the following years.

1905 - Robert Wilson's Death

The Dear Old Man dies in England.

1906 - Overweights of Joy

A sequel to *Things as They Are*, telling the joys of the work.

1909 - Lotus Buds

Published in November with fifty photographs of the children of Dohnavur.

1912 - Walker's Death

Thomas Walker dies in August, away from Dohnavur. A dispute over land and a compound wall follows. About this time Amy begins to pray about boys in danger.

1913 - Her Mother's Death

Catherine Carmichael dies in England on 14 July. About a hundred and thirty children are now in the family at Dohnavur.

c. 1914 - A Charge of Kidnapping

According to the later biographies, a charge is brought in connection with a girl named Muttammal, and Amy faces possible arrest; the case is eventually dropped. The First World War begins in August.

1915 - Ponnammal's Death

Ponnammal dies after a long illness.

1916 - Sisters of the Common Life; Walker of Tinnevelly

In March Amy forms the Sisters of the Common Life. Her memoir of Thomas Walker is published.

1918 - The First Boy

In January a baby boy is brought to Dohnavur, and the boys' work begins. *Ponnammal: Her Story* is published about this time.

Early 1920s - Raj

She comes to know the outlaw she calls Raj, who is later killed by the police. *Raj, Brigand Chief* follows in 1927. *Ragland, Spiritual Pioneer* is published in 1922 and *Mimosa* in 1924.

1924-1925 - Stephen Neill

Stephen Neill works at Dohnavur and leaves in November 1925 after a painful disagreement.

1925-1927 - Independence

The link with the Zenana Society ends in 1925. The Dohnavur Fellowship is registered in 1927.

Late 1920s - The Hospital

With doctors among its members, the Fellowship opens its own hospital, named in Tamil the Place of Heavenly Healing.

1930 - Reform Stalls

Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy, who has brought forward proposals to end temple dedication in the Madras Legislative Council, resigns her seat in protest at Gandhi's arrest; the bill lies dormant.

1931 - The Fall

On 24 October she falls into an uncovered pit in a building being prepared for the work, at Kalakadu according to her biographers, breaking her leg, dislocating her ankle and injuring her spine. She is largely confined to her room for the rest of her life.

1932-1938 - Books from a Room

Gold Cord (1932), *Rose from Brier* (1933) and *If* (1938), among others.

1939 - Arulai's Death

Arulai, one of the leaders of the Fellowship, dies after a long illness. The Second World War begins.

1947 - Independence and the Madras Act

India becomes independent on 15 August. On 9 October the Madras Devadasis (Prevention of Dedication) Act is passed, outlawing the dedication of girls to temples in the Madras Presidency. Popular accounts sometimes give 1948.

1951 - Death

Amy Carmichael dies at Dohnavur on 18 January, aged eighty-three, and is buried in God's Garden under a bird-bath inscribed *Amma*.

1953 and After

Frank Houghton's *Amy Carmichael of Dohnavur* is published (1953), followed in later decades by Elisabeth Elliot's *A Chance to Die* (1987) and Iain Murray's *Amy Carmichael: Beauty for Ashes* (2015). The Dohnavur Fellowship continues its work in Tamil Nadu under Indian leadership.

Appendix D: Notes on Sources and Method

"it seemed good to me also, having traced the course of all things accurately from the first, to write unto thee in order ... that thou mightest know the certainty concerning the things wherein thou wast instructed."
— Luke 1:3-4, ASV

This appendix explains where the story told in this book comes from, how the sources were weighed, and which popular claims have been corrected or qualified. It is written for readers who want to check the story for themselves, and for anyone who will retell it.

Her Own Books

The first source for Amy Carmichael's life is her own writing. This book has quoted directly only from her books published before 1929, which are in the public domain in the United States, and almost all the quotations come from one of them: *Things as They Are: Mission Work in Southern India* (London: Morgan and Scott, 1903), the text of which is in the Ochorus library. That book was written from the field in 1901 and 1902, and its account of Preena's arrival, given under the name Pearl-eyes, is the earliest that survives. Quotations from it have been checked against the Ochorus text, including the later edition's confirmatory notes and Eugene Stock's preface.

Her other early books, *From Sunrise Land* (1895), *Overweights of Joy* (1906), *Lotus Buds* (1909), *Walker of Tinnevelly* (1916) and *Ragland, Spiritual Pioneer* (1922), are named and described but not quoted. Her later books, including *Gold Cord* (1932), *Rose from Brier* (1933) and *If* (1938), may still be in copyright in some countries, and they are named so that readers can find them, but they are not quoted. Where this book reports the substance of them, it does so in its own words.

Her books must be read as what they are: writing for supporters, shaped by a strong evangelical conviction, often using translated or changed names, and openly selective. She said repeatedly that she was leaving much out. Where this book relies on her account, it says so.

The Biographies

Frank Houghton, *Amy Carmichael of Dohnavur* (1953), and Elisabeth Elliot, *A Chance to Die: The Life and Legacy of Amy Carmichael* (1987), are the standard lives, and Iain H. Murray, *Amy Carmichael: Beauty for Ashes* (2015), is a more recent one. All are in copyright. This book has used them, and summaries of them, only as guides to facts and dates, and has neither quoted them nor followed their wording. Several details in this book rest chiefly on them, and are marked in the text with phrases such as "her biographers record": among them the comet at Harrogate, the fountain in Belfast, the Glasgow convention, the fur gloves in Japan, the cave, the coffee-stained skin, the Muttammal case, the place of her fall, and the story of Raj.

Scholarship and Reference

For the controversy with Stephen Neill, this book has drawn on Dyron B. Daughrity, "A Dissonant Mission: Stephen Neill, Amy Carmichael, and Missionary Conflict in South India," *International Review of Mission* (2008). For the history of temple dedication and its abolition, it has drawn on the general literature on the devadasi reform movement in the Madras Presidency, and in particular on the arguments of Davesh Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures: Devadasis, Memory, and Modernity in South India* (2012), together with standard accounts of the Madras Devadasis (Prevention of Dedication) Act of 1947, Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy and Moovalur Ramamirtham. Reference works, encyclopedia entries, the Dohnavur Fellowship's own published material, and the materials of the Welcome Evangelical Church in Belfast have been used for orientation. None of these modern works is reproduced here.

Corrections and Qualifications

The burned hands. Popular accounts say Preena's hands were branded as a punishment for her first escape. Amy's 1903 account says that the temple woman burned the child's fingers for "some childish fault," after which she ran away to her mother. This book follows the 1903 account.

The date of Preena's coming. The usual date, 7 March 1901, is that of her being brought to the bungalow; some accounts give 6 March for her escape the evening before. Amy's own early account gives no date.

"Temple prostitutes." Popular accounts sometimes say that Amy rescued a thousand temple prostitutes. Most of the children at Dohnavur were infants or small girls, many of them received because they were

thought to be in danger of dedication, and many for other reasons. This book avoids the phrase.

The 1947 Act. The dedication of girls to temples was outlawed in the Madras Presidency by the Madras Devadasis (Prevention of Dedication) Act, passed on 9 October 1947, not in 1948 and not for all India at once; other states legislated later. The campaign was led by Indian reformers, and the law should not be credited to Amy Carmichael, though her witness was part of the wider movement.

Her mother's death. Catherine Carmichael died on 14 July 1913, not in 1912. Thomas Walker died in August 1912 (sources give the 20th or the 24th).

The Welcome Hall. Sources give 1887 or January 1889 for its opening. This book notes both.

Conversion. Most sources give 1883, when she was fifteen; some give 1882.

The fall. Most popular accounts place it at Dohnavur; the biographies place it in a building at Kalakadu being prepared for the work. The date, 24 October 1931, is agreed.

"Missionary life is simply a chance to die." The saying is widely attributed to Amy Carmichael and gave Elisabeth Elliot her title, but it is seldom given with a source or date, and it is mentioned here as attributed.

Blue eyes and coffee. Both stories are told in popular accounts. The first comes from her own recollection, and the ages given for it vary. The second is consistent with her known practice of wearing Indian dress, but its details are uncertain.

Thirty-five books. Counts of her books vary widely, depending on whether booklets, collections of verse and posthumous compilations are included. This book does not give a number.

What This Book Has Not Done

This book has not invented dialogue, scenes, names, dates or numbers. Where a story rests on one source, it says so. It has not drawn on unpublished archives, and it has not been able to check court records or the Fellowship's registers. Readers who wish to go further are encouraged to read Amy Carmichael's own books, beginning with *Things as They Are*, and the biographies by Houghton and Elliot, and to listen to the Indian voices, Christian and Hindu, who have written about the same years from their own side.

Scripture

All Scripture is quoted from the American Standard Version of 1901, which is in the public domain. Where Amy Carmichael remembered a verse in the Authorised Version and the wording differs, this is noted in the text. The quotations from Scripture inside her own writings are given as she printed them.

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