



Amy Carmichael

Inkyung Sung

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Amy Carmichael is one of the people KyungOk and I would most like to know. About 30 years ago we heard that she was one of the people who influenced Francis & Edith Schaeffer (the founders of L'Abri Fellowship) most, but I didn't have an opportunity to read her books or to study her life. Only a few years ago, I found a biography on her by Elliot Elisabeth. More recently, I was pleased to find several of articles about her from Wikipedia and other books. During my sabbatical, I wrote this brief report based on what I have read over the years.

A Confident Young Lady

Amy Carmichael was born on Dec. 6, 1867, in the small village of Millisle which faces the North Irish Sea to David and Catherine Carmichael who owned and operated a flour mill. She was the oldest of seven children. During her childhood, she was curious, spontaneous, and very naughty - she would sometimes take her younger siblings to the roof to slide down.

Her parents raised her to be a confident girl. They were devout Presbyterians of Northern Ireland. Her father was a man of conviction, her mother was a woman of faith and courage. They had a very strict disciplinary principle in the house. Uncompromising teaching of the Northern Ireland Presbyterian Church and the Arctic winters added strength to her character.

When she was 12, she went to Herogate Boarding School in Yorkshire. She stayed Malborough house for three years to take basic education and to be trained in as a lady. When she graduated the school at 17, she started teaching at Belfast; she taught factory girls at church, and at night she taught at the YWCA.

Her teaching for factory girls gained a reputation. By the time she was 21 in 1888, her YWCA classes hosted about 500 girls - the classes were for bible study, music band, choir, sewing, prayer, etc. To accommodate the waves of students, she had to build a worship center -- a temporary housing primarily made of tin materials. She established her own financial

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principle during the construction process. It tells us how confident and faithful she was.

Following Missionary Vision

In 1880, this very promising young teacher of over 500 students resigned for one man. It was the Quaker Robert Wilson, she devoted herself to care for him until she had to leave for mission-work two years later. Wilson owned a mine and was a financial supporter of the Keswick Convention. Amy Carmichael had heard James Hudson Taylor speak at Keswick and she decided to dedicate her life to missionary work.

The Keswick Convention is an annual gathering of evangelical Christians in Keswick, in the English county of Cumbria. The convention began in 1875 as a catalyst and focal point for the emerging Higher Life movement in the United Kingdom. It was founded by the Anglican T. D. Harford-Battersby and the Quaker Robert Wilson. The first Keswick Convention had over four hundred people in attendance. They met under the banner of "All One in Christ Jesus" which is still the Convention's watchword. Among the Keswick Convention's early leading lights were Anglicans J. W. Webb-Peploe, Evan Henry Hopkins, William Haslam, W. Hay M. H. Aitken, and Handley Moule, as well as the Baptist Frederick Brotherton Meyer. Another frequent speaker in the early years was Hudson Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission.

After Belfast Keswick Convention in 1886, Robert Wilson befriended with the Carmichaels. He was a spiritual father figure to Amy after her father passed away. Without a doubt, he had been 100 % behind her for her financial, emotional, and spiritual support. In 1882, she became the first missionary sent out by Keswick Convention. Despite Wilson's strong opposition, she arrived at Mas, Japan, in May 1893. There she learned the difficulty of cross cultural evangelism and the importance of language proficiency. She also learned from Missionary Buckstern of the importance of loving leadership, taking things easy, being generous and kind, and being protective.

Unfortunately, while learning Japanese, she was stricken by encephalitis; she went to Shanghai to take a break. Because of the uncomfortable weather, she moved to Colombo where she heard the news of Wilson's illness. She straight went back to England. In about a year, she was re-accredited by the Keswick Convention and traveled to Bangalore, India, again despite Wilson's opposition. Her passion for the Gospel was burning as it had in Belfast and then in Japan, and now in India.

A friend of a Notorious Bandit

There are numerous anecdotes throughout her life in India. However the story of a conversion of Raj, a notorious outlaw and bandit in a forest area, is one of the most dramatic ones. At

that time, everyone around the province was afraid of Raj. Amy, however, tried every means to reach him. Eventually she was able to meet with Raj with baskets of bread and food in his secret hideout in a deep forest and befriended with him.

Raj continued his illegal activities and frequented the jailhouses. One day when he was arrested and incarcerated in a prison cell, Amy saw Raj in adream - 'Raj's jail door opened spontaneously and inmates escaped all over'. Amy rushed to the jail. Indeed, the jail door was open but Raj was sitting in his cell with no intent of escaping. Amy asked him, "Do you want to be baptized?" "Yes, I would like to believe in Jesus,"he said. Amy invited a pastor to have him baptized.

Some time later, Raj and a few friends broke out of the prison. About 300 Indian policemen had been tracking them in vain. One day, Amy met him in the forest and told him, "I would like to hear that you became a good man and died without any weapons." In the end, as the story goes, Raj was killed by the police and he did not resist despite the showers of bullets. It was also known that Raj entrusted his children to Amy when they met in the forest. Amy was a very strong woman, but she was warm-hearted and, around her, people felt at home.

'Amma' of Countless Outcast Children

Amy started in India by joining medical mission trips supported by the woman outreach team of Episcopal Churches. She traveled through Palamkota, Pannaivilai, and Dohnavur, and pitched tents to preach Gospel. On March 7, 1901, Amy was busy with the day's tasks, when suddenly a girl named Prina ran into her arms when Prina young, she was offered to a temple by her mother. She was almost sacrificed on the temple's altar before she ran away.

Prina vividly remembered the very moment she was founded Amy. "It was Amy who held me on her lap and kissed on my cheek. From that moment, Amy was my Ammaand I was her daughter." Because of Prina, Amy got the nickname "child snatcher" and became "Amma" of countless children even though she has never been married. "Amma" means "mother" in the Tamil language of the Indian subcontinent.

Amy wanted to become a genuine Amma to the children so she started a community where they could study, eat, and sleep. It was called the Dohnavur Fellowship, a shelter for the outcast children - children disowned by their parents, children who had run away from temples or their homes, children sold to temples, diseased and discarded children, children of unwed moms, etc. All were welcome to stay with her. By the time Amy had to go to be with the Lord, in January 18, 1951, the fellowship sheltered over 1000 people including staff. In the past 100 years, countless children have been saved and have grown up to start healthy families and to serve their country.

Captain of Prayer Fleet

Over 50 years, Amy sometimes had to feed hundreds or thousands of people, and it was all done without any subsidies from the government of India. She didn't organize a financial support group, either. She simply believed that somehow God will provide for her. Just like the title of one of her books, "Nor Scrip," she prayed and believed in God's intervention. She had certain principles that were the foundation of the way she prayed and the way she handled her finances. Some of them are as follows:

- 1) Prayer is the center of our mission; Prayer is the first and the last thing.
- 2) It is necessary that we pray for money.
- 3) We do not request financial support, nor do we ask anyone to fundraise for us.
- 4) Unless someone asks us first, we do not express our financial needs. Even when someone asks us about our needs, our preference is not to share our specific needs, because we do not want financial support that was meant to support others to come to us.
- 5) Except for the need for money, we express our other needs very specifically. For example, we can say, "We need more color pencils and toy hammers."
- 6) After prayer, we wait for God's "approval signature" or for things happening as God has shown us. For example, we do not start a construction project unless we identify God's confirmation through a "designated offering" or an offering for "seed money for construction."
- 7) God takes full responsibility on things He has directed.
- 8) If there is any misunderstanding or illegality is implied, we either return the money or do not accept them.
- 9) Every offering has its own story. We use the offering only as it is designated. For example, when someone sent \$260 from America with a memo "please use this money for finishing something," We spend the money to finish the window screen installation.
- 10) Satan is waiting for the opportunity when we will be counting on the gains and losses. It means Satan is waiting for people to be tempted by counting the money.

A Rich Lady of a Bag of Essentials

Was Amy Carmichael free of all everyday stress? I would imagine that she was not. Although she was a woman of formidable faith, she had to feed hundreds of children everyday, as well as fix their beds, maintain the failing and rusting utilities, and each month, she had to pay the fellow workers something if there was left for her to pay them with. Not to mention of physical and emotional stress, there must have been an enormous stress from the financial shortfalls.

It is said that, from time to time, Amy would say, "Of course, there was stress to some degree." How can she, the woman of faith, say "of course" and "stress"! When we read her poem or her books, we sense that she must have been under a lot of stress. It didn't sound like she had a special prescription to resolve it. Probably, it was not a fancy trip or luxurious sabbatical, but most likely she simply just clung to our Lord's hands, bit the bullet, and decided to continue to live without.

In life she had been saying, "I don't want any household goods that cannot fit in a big cloth wrapper," and she was true to her word. She left behind a few framed pictures hanging in her room, pieces of clothing and pens and pencils, was single and a poor missionary with nothing in her hands. "Bathing in warm water" and "reading books surrounded by a roomful of books" were the greatest luxuriesshe ever had.

Strict Standard for Workers

Amy called Dohnavur a "waste disposal site." I'm sure that Amy was thinking about the apostle Paul's Words - "when we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even until now." (1 Cor 4:13) Although she had been working at the waste land, she had maintained a very high standard when selecting a fellow worker. She had very strict standards and never compromised them.

There were two types of workers: "the prayer workers" were those who would lift Dohnavur up in their daily prayers and "the field workers" were those care-givers, pastors, pharmacists, nurses, doctors, and cooks who served the people according to their specialties. The standards set out by Amy in screening applicants to work for this "waste disposal site" were very strict, according to the "Quotations on the standards of identifying fellow servants for Dohnavur" which biography writers discovered.

"Even though we are working for orphans or disowned children, a candidate for serving at this fellowship has to be a thoughtful, considerate, knowledgeable, and faithful person with proven character."

"Preaching in a church is a glorious responsibility. If the preaching requires a teaspoonful of Grace, serving at Dohnavur calls for a river-full of Grace."

"Are you willing to live the life of Calvary? Unless you genuinely want to follow Jesus and carry His Cross, you should not come to Dohnavur. If you can joyfully do the most contemptuous task, please come to the Fellowship."

I know that Amy was blamed for being stubborn, dictatorial, extreme, or an unrealistic example that no one can follow, but she fought the good fight and ran all the way through her race, faithfully, to be with the Lord at age 84, in India. Just as she wanted "to be worn out rather than rusted," she lived for orphans and she wrote 35 books. Along with George Müller and Hudson Taylor, Amy Carmichael relied on the power of Holy Spirit for her work.

Her example of bravely in living by faith makes me feel in awe of her. Unless she was willing to starve to death, how could she live in this dangerous world, and only rely on God's daily provision? Perhaps our Lord is looking for another Amy who doesn't miss "a chance to die" for His kingdom and His righteousness.