

Amy Carmichael: Beauty for Ashes, A Biography by Iain H. Murray, Banner of Truth Trust, Carlisle, PA (2015) (36 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

1. Teaching to Be Appealing Not Entertaining

Teaching was to be made as appealing as possible. This was not the same as being as entertaining as possible. The years of childhood were too important to be filled with temporary amusement. She wanted them to take in what they would need for life, and agreed whole-heartedly with the words of Arnold of Rugby on the importance of memorization,

It is a great mistake to think they should understand all they learn; for God has ordered that in youth the memory should act vigorously, independent of the understand.

Whole sections of Scripture were therefore repeated aloud—1 Corinthians 13 every Monday morning—and whole chapters were learned by some. One child was even encouraged to proceed to the study of the Greek New Testament. (Page 56)

2. Love, Punishment, Encouragements Were Given Students

In all of this the love was not sentimental. There were punishments as well as encouragements. Childhood larks met with no severity, but untruthfulness did. While the children could sell items from their own vegetable garden, they received no prizes for work done. ‘The great reward’, they were told, ‘was to be trusted with harder, more responsible work.’ (Page 57)

3. Amy’s Favorite Sayings She Used

A number of the sayings she would use or invent would long be remembered: “Faithfulness in little things is a very great thing”; “Never about to, always to do”, “Joy is not gush, Joy is not jolliness. Joy is perfect acquiescence in God’s will,” “Let nothing be said about anyone unless it passes through the three sieves;: Is it true? kind? necessary?” (Page 58)

4. Child’s Unbelievable Death

The same week, Lulla, one of the children of the previous Sunday afternoon’s gathering, was suddenly afflicted by one of the illnesses which could come with such speed in the East. Early on the following Sunday morning she was in such pain, ‘struggling for breath and looking to us for something we could not give’, that Amy left her bedside to go and pray that she would be taken quickly:

I was not more than a minute away, but when I returned she was radiant. Her little lovely face was lighted up with amazement and happiness. She was looking up and clapping her hands as delighted children do. When she saw me she stretched out her arms, and fling them round my neck, as though saying good-by, in a hurry to be gone; then she turned to the others in the same eager way, and then again, holding out her arms to Someone whom we could not see, she clapped her hands. Had only one of us seen this thing, we might have doubted. But we all three saw it. There was no trace of pain in her face. She was never to taste pain again. We looks where she was looking, almost thinking that we would see what she saw. What must the foundation of joy be if the spray from the edge of the pool can be like that? (Page 65-66)

5. Christians Should Never Lament Death

Amy believed that for Christians death was never to be lamented. It had been a custom at Dohnavur to sing every Sunday night as the closing hymn, “For all the saints”. Of that hymn, Amy was to say, “all though the days, and often through the night, that song sings with me,

And when the strife if fierce, the warfare long,
Steals on the ear the distant triumph song
And hearts are brave again and arms are strong,
Alleluia! Alleluia!”

(Page 67)

6. Amy’s Life Was Refreshing Then Trials

If there was any pattern to Amy Carmichael’s life it was of times of refreshing then of trials, of exhilarating ‘climbing’ then of walking in dark ravines. In part her explanation was that demonic activity followed the work of the Holy Spirit. As she quoted from George Bowen,

When Christianity assumes an aggressive attitude the first result is a great exhibition of Satanic power. Satan’s power to be manifested must be assaulted. (Page 71)

7. Amy Weaker Because of Her Lost Colleague

Amy was the weaker when her ‘strong arm’ died at the age of fifty four. What she owed to Walker’s ‘courageous championship’ of the children’s work, ‘through its first very difficult years, no words can tell, nor can words tell how he is missed’. At times, as she

faced her loss, she would need to say to herself, “Don’t give up, don’t be afraid: go on. Prayer for ‘fortitude’ entered her life. (Page 72)

8. Amy Didn’t Lament Her Mother’s Death Nor Grovel in Her Loss

Amy did not lament her mother’s death—for no Christian death was to be ‘lamented’—in the days ahead she needed to preach to herself, “I must remind myself to live in the joy of those gone, not grovel in the sense of my loss.” (Page 73)

9. God Provided During Slim War Times

A change in the financial support of the work was observable at this time. After several years when unsolicited gifts had been enough to cover expenses, there had come a surplus which could be laid aside. The outbreak of world war in August 1914 was to show the significance of this surplus. The British pound dwindled in value until, at one point; it fell to four shillings—less than a quarter of its pre-war value. The exchange rate soared, and so did prices. Now it cost fifteen times more to bring a child to Dohnavur from the nearest station. Rice, the most needed daily commodity, was similarly affected. Additional ground, which Amy had purchased not long before, became the more valuable as it produced food supplies under Arul Dasan’s care. “We have never lacked one good thing,” Amy could write; “and during the years of the war, people of the town and villages began to say, ‘God is there’; for they could not account for what they saw except by saying that.” (Page 75-76)

10. Failure or Success Is of No Eternal Value

Not to yield is all that matters. Failure or success as the world understands these words, is of no eternal account. To be able to stand steady in defeat is in itself a victory. (Page 78)

11. Persecution Is Not To Be Dreaded

Persecution was not to be dreaded, in Amy’s words, “It winnows the grain; we do not want a church of chaff.” (Page 79)

12. Better to Be Disappointed Than Not Help A Soul

It is true that professed conversion did not always stand, and this was one of the greatest sorrows to be faced. But Amy would give no place to cynicism.

Better to be disappointed a thousand times—yes, and be deceived—than one miss a chance to help a soul. The love of God suffices for any disappointment, for any defeat. And in that love is the energy of faith and the very sap of hope. (Page 79)

13. Amy's Prayers Answered, A Boy's Compound Started

Commonly Amy was given hope of what God might do before she saw any fulfillment. One such hope grew out of her concern for boys. Not at first did she recognize that male infants were also acquired by the temple priests for evil purposes. They were wanted, for instance, to be acolytes attending the gods in processions," to act in immoral plays, or become the property of homosexuals. From 1912 she made this a matter of prayer. Although she asked God to take her burden about it away, or show her what to do, she had to wait. Then late one evening in January 1918 an event made action unavoidable. A needy child was handed in and was put in a nursery before it was discovered that it was a boy. By 1926 there was to be a boys' compound with some seventy to eighty children. (Page 81-82)

14. Full Inspiration of Scripture Necessary for Missionaries

The Church Missionary Society had declined to make full inspiration of Scripture a necessary qualification for their missionaries. (Page 85)

15. Elisabeth Elliot's Three Things: Scripture, God, & Loyalty to Others

A council made up of eight of Amy's best helpers was formed, with no distinction made on grounds of nationality. Amy continued in the overall leadership of the work she had been given to do. The parting thus led to a real consolidation. Harmony had to rest on foundational beliefs. In the words of Elisabeth Elliot:

Three things mattered: the verbal inspiration of Scripture, the power of God to deal with His enemy, and loyalty to one another. (Page 88)

16. Perfect Church Yet To Come, Heaven Not Yet

As Walker would say, "The perfect church, not having spot or blemish or any such thing is yet to come" Heaven is not yet. (Page 93)

17. Books Were Amy's Great Luxury, She Had Bookcases of Her Books

One of the things that brought children and others to Amy's room was to borrow books. Here were the bookcases, Amy has written, to which the household would come when they want biography, missionary and otherwise, and books of other kinds too. They are my great luxury, my mental change of air.

Her enthusiasm for 'old' rather than modern books must have touched some of them. The old for her were like 'wells of cool refreshment, while the modern, in comparison, could be 'sawdust', 'thin', 'skimmed milk and tepid tea'. (Page 101)

18. Sunshine Not Necessary For Those Who Walk In Faith

Although moonlight is not sunshine, it well suits those who walk by faith, not by sight. And faith is the key to Christian happiness:

We in our lesser mystery
Of lingering ill and winged death,
Would fain see clear, but, could we see,
What need would be for faith? (Page 103)

19. Amy's Books Had Blood & Iron in Them

Natural gifts for writing Amy Carmichael undoubtedly had, yet they might have remained dormant if, in coming to India, she was not stirred to write 'words of fire'. "Writing is torn from a person," it has been said. "If you are going to say something worthwhile, you're going to burn." Amy's thirty-five books, born of prayer, are in that category. Whether they relate to what she saw in South India, or to the Christian life in general, they were written because she had a message. "Pray" she noted for the family, that every book, booklet, letter, that goes out from this Fellowship may have blood and iron in it. Pray that we may never degenerate to the merely interesting. (Page 106-107)

20. Amy Doubted Whether Hitler Should Be Prayed For

The 1940s were much the same as the previous decade as far as Amy's personal life was concerned. Dohnavur was far removed from the trouble of the Second World War, although that was not certain in 1942 when there was possibility of a Japanese invasion of India. Plans were prepared in case of an evacuation of numbers from the compound would be available. Although Amy's location was remote, she was familiar with newspapers and magazines which came regularly from Europe. She maintained an active interest in world news, and doubted whether Hitler should be prayed for. (Page 108)

21. When Decisions Must Be Made, Look Up to the Lord

When decisions have to be made, don't look back and wonder what I would have done. Look up, and light will come to show what our Lord and Master would have you do. (Page 110)

22. Amy's Death in 1951

Her 83rd birthday came and passed on December 16, 1950. Then the day she awaited came on the morning of January 18, 1951, and the Prayer Tower rang out the tune of a favorite hymn, "Ten Thousand Times Ten Thousand." Back on June 21, 1900—her arrival date at the future home—the place had resounded with song. So it was at her departure. "She was, as one remembered her, "happy hearted, never gloomy, lively in worship, festive in rejoicing. She wanted joy, triumph, tambourines even after burial." (Page 112,113)

23. Children Brought Up As House Plants

An Indian pastor, hearing reports of the Fellowship from a distance, concluded the children were brought up 'like house plants'. When he met her, he was ashamed of his prejudice:

My doubts vanished. Instinctively I felt that here was a person just beside me who had realized God, I have never seen such a beautiful face. (Page 119)

24. Amy Avoided the Limelight But Was the Boss

Certainly there were elements in Amy's make-up which might seem contradictory. She avoided the limelight, wrote the history of Dohnavur with scarce a reference to herself, tried to avoid an honor conferred by the government, and insisted on no gravestone for her memory; yet one visitor at Dohnavur wrote, "There was only one boss and that was Amma. She wouldn't proceed with any course of action until everyone had agreed, but who dared oppose her?" (Page 121)

25. Her Leadership Was Natural

By the time a team of competent helpers had become established, Amy was so far ahead in terms of experience in what was predominantly a woman's work, that her leadership was the most natural thing. (Page 122)

26. Amy Came To India to be an Assistant Evangelist

She saw herself as put in a roll not chosen by herself. She had come to India to be a assistant evangelist, not an Amma to generations of children. A sense of calling was fundamental to her life. (Page 122)

27. Amy Opposed the Oxford Group in 1930s

As she matured she was increasingly aware of the danger of being led by mere subjective feelings, and that presumption can lie close to faith. In the 1930s she opposed the teaching of the Oxford Group movement who claimed that ‘direct guidance’ is given to the person in whom there is complete surrender. (Page 125)

28. Amy Warned Against Too Much Recreation with Fellow Europeans

The emphasis she wanted to give in using these words was right, it is parallel to Paul’s words in 2 Timothy 2:4. She was warning against what she had seen of missionary work in India, where too much time could go to recreations with fellow Europeans, and a too-ready acceptance of such ‘amusements’ as novel reading. While she did not decry recreation as such (she enjoyed swimming), she believed that the spirituality necessary for vibrant Christian witness was being weakened by too many distractions and entanglement with lesser things. Her strictures were not without balance.

We are variously made. What rests one person wearies another. The great thing is to find what rests us most, what sends us back to our work most truly refreshed in body and spirit. (Page 126-127)

29. The Children Taught Them Many Things

Given the submission to the sovereignty of God which pervaded her life, the idea of ‘claiming’ anything from God was unthinkable. In that same connection she wrote:

Our little children had taught us many things. We knew they did not always know what was good for them, and we should have been very grieved if they had persisted in imploring for something, after we had let them understand that we could not give it ... Not, “Thy will be changed’ but “Thy will be done’, is the prayer we are taught to pray. (Page 130)

30. New Testament Christian Traits Taught

“Some years ago, I surveyed the entire New Testament looking for instances where various Christian character traits were taught by precept or by example. I found twenty-seven. It may not surprise you that love was taught most often, some fifty times. It may surprise you that humility was a close second with forty instances. But what really surprised me is that trust in God in all our circumstances was third, being taught thirteen or more times,” Jerry Bridges, *Respectable Sins: Confronting the Sins We Tolerate* (NavPress, 2007), p. 63. (Page 134-foot note)

31. Amy Use of Jerry Taylor's Prayer

Her use of the prayer of Jerry Taylor was life-long:

Lord, do Thou turn me all into love, and all my love into obedience, and let my obedience be without interruption, (Page 137)

32. Sermon on Ephesians 3:14-19 by Warfield

Any would have valued the words of B. B. Warfield in a sermon on Ephesians 3:14-19: "The Spirit works love, and only through working this love, enlarges our apprehension. Love is the enlarger." *Faith and Life* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1990), p. 275. (foot note Page 138)

33. Her Calling: Cutting the Toe Nails of 1,000 Children

Her calling as a mother meant 'cutting the toe nails of a thousand children', and doing that with a greater hope in view. For numbers that hope was to be fulfilled: "We shall train them to live for others, not self." Through the years, from the company of those once children, there have been those who have remained at Dohnavur to look after 'senior citizens', or nurse in the hospital which at one point annually served 1,800 in-patients, and over 60,000 out-patients, when local facilities were few. Others work with different Christian agencies, or in secular employment, and 'many marry and established Christian homes'. (Page 139-140)

34. 15 Million Women Living in Slavery in India

Today rescue from temple prostitution in India is no longer needed but 15 million women in India are said to be still living in slavery. (Page 140)

35. Information from the Dohnavur Fellowship

Further information from the Dohnavur Fellowship, Dohnavur, Tirunelveli District, Tamil Nadu 627 102, or from website, www.dohnavurfellowship.org.in or www.amycarmichael.org. "No appeal has ever been made for money, only for prayer; but many, through the years, have sent sacrificial gifts. Never has an unprotected children been refused for lack of funds: never has a patent needed to be turned away because he or she could not pay for needed medical help" (Page 140 foot note)

36. Moffett's Lecture on, "Has Christianity Failed in India?"

Historian of Christianity in Asia, and son of American missionary to Korea, Samuel Hugh Moffett, lectured in 2005 on "Has Christianity failed in Asia?" Asking the question what made missions grow, he answered;

The best answer I know was given by my father fifty years ago. To an inquiring committee from America, he simply said, "For the last fifty years we lifted up to this people the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit did the rest."

He concluded his address with convictions which were also Amy Carmichael.

"Christianity will fail," he warned, "if Christians lose their enthusiasm for evangelism ... If they do not validate their spiritual message with social compassion and integrity ... Finally, Christians will lose everything if they abandon their theological centre: one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and one Savior, Jesus Christ, and one definite, inspired rule of faith and practice the Scriptures." (Page 145-146)