

This I Remember (Reminiscences of J. Oswald Sanders) by J. Oswald Sanders, Kingsway Publications, Sussex, England, 1982. (17 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

1. Determination Brings Reward

As recently as May 23rd 1981, the Bible Society of Britain organized a 'walkathon' in Wales. It followed the route taken by Mary Jones in 1800. Her determination to own a Bible for herself directly resulted in the formation of the British and Foreign Bible Society whose work has grown until there are now fifty-nine Bible Societies all over the world serving 150 countries and territories.

Bibles were very rare and money very scarce for girls like Mary who lived in the village of Llanfihangel-y-pennant. It took her six long years to save sufficient money to purchase a Bible, for they were very costly in those days. Then she had a walk of twenty-five miles to the town of Bala, where, she had been told a Mr. Charles had Welsh Bibles for sale.

For most of the way, she walked barefoot with her shoes in her hand, ready to put on when she reached the town. She reached Bala, only to learn to her dismay that the single Bible Mr. Charles had was already promised to someone else. It seemed that her years of saving and the weary journey were to be for nothing. But when Mr. Charles heard Mary's story and saw her disappointment, he felt that such sacrifice and determination should not go unrewarded, so he changed-his mind and sold the Bible to her instead.

So impressed was Mr. Charles with Mary's passion to possess a Bible that he decided something should be done to make the Scriptures available to ordinary people at a price more within the range of their ability to pay. As a result of his endeavors, a meeting was convened in London on March 7th 1804, attended by 300 people, which resulted in the formation of the British and Foreign Bible Society.

So it was Mary Jones who unconsciously sparked the great Bible Societies that have girdled the globe with the Scriptures in fifteen hundred languages and more. Although written in another context, the words of James 3:5 are appropriate: "Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark" (NIV). [page 11]

2. Manner of Raising Funds

Here were two men, Müller and Moody, both of whom were great men of faith, both were greatly used of God, and yet they employed diametrically opposed policies in

relation to raising funds for Christian work. Which was right? Apparently God honored both methods. The Holy Spirit did not appear to be grieved by Moody's method of appealing to individual Christians. So, although the Müller method was more to my liking, I could also see that God could lead others to adopt a different method without forfeiting His blessing. [page 17]

3. God Supplies Guidance

God's clocks keep accurate time, and when guidance is sincerely sought, He knows how to supply it. [page 23]

4. The Necessity of Faith

It is not God's method to answer every question of His querulous children, nor to explain every seeming ambiguous action. Were He to do so, where would be the necessity of faith? It is in such circumstances that faith achieves its finest triumphs. [page 27]

5. Five Elements of Prayer

...Prayer consisted in at least five main elements. With this concept, obvious, but new to me, a whole new dimension of prayer emerged, for I realized that each of these elements should find a daily place in a well-balanced prayer life. They are: *worship*, the soul's adoring contemplation of God as He has revealed Himself in Christ and the Scriptures; *thanksgiving* the grateful acknowledgement of blessings and benefits received; *confession*, the penitent acknowledgement of sin and taking sides with God against it; *petition*, making request for our own needs; *intercession*, our expression of concern for the needs of others. [page 37]

6. The Use of a Good Hymnal

The use of a good hymn book – especially one of the older Church Hymnals that are rich in hymns about God, Christ, the Spirit, and the great doctrines – I also found helpful in expanding thought. Many of the great hymns are next door to inspired, and we rob ourselves if we neglect to use them. To think and pray through a noble hymn brings one into closer fellowship with God. [page 38]

7. The Lord's Prayer Pattern

A further milestone was reached when I received a deeper insight into the Lord's Prayer. I saw that in the pattern prayer Jesus was not giving a rigid form of words, but

a model on which our prayers should be fashioned. He did not say “In these precise words,” but “After this manner pray.”

The fact that the prayer is half-finished before any personal petition is presented indicated that in prayer God and His interests must have first place. The prayer also unfolds the sevenfold relationship we sustain to God when we pray: Father and child; God and worshipper, King and subject; Master and servant; Benefactor and beneficiary; Savior and sinner; Guide and pilgrim. It is a helpful approach in prayer to use a different one of these relationships each day of the week in thought, as it imparts freshness and variety. [page 38-39]

8. Answering Our Own Prayers

Sometimes we offer prayers which God intends we should answer ourselves. [page 44]

9. Criticism from Church Leaders

Dr Alexander Maclaren, the noted Bible expositor, had taken up his memorable ministry in Manchester, and great crowds came to hear his eloquent sermons: After a period, however, he began to hear complaints that he was not devoting sufficient time to pastoral visitation. (In this, his experience was not unique!) So he summoned his elders, and they confirmed the fact that there was some dissatisfaction on this matter.

“Gentlemen,” he said. “When you invited me to this pulpit, did you engage my head or my heels? If you want my heels, you can have them.” Fortunately or unfortunately, only an Alexander Maclaren could take such a line with his officers and get away with it.”

[page 51-52]

10. A Prophet Is Not Welcome in His Own Home

Dr. F.A. Robinson of Toronto was conducting meetings in Auckland. In the course of conversation he told me that he used to arrange the American and Canadian itineraries of preachers like Dr. G. Campbell Morgan and Dr. F.B. Meyer, with whom he was on terms of intimate friendship.

On one occasion, when he was staying in Dr. Meyer's home in London, he and the great preacher were talking late into the night. It was the time when men sometimes share confidences, and the old man, with tears glistening in his eyes, said to him:

“You know; Robinson, I have homes all around the world where I am warmly welcomed. It seems as if the only home in which I am not welcome is my own!”

Few who listened to Dr. Meyer's messages of comfort and encouragement knew at what a price they had been hammered out. Could it have been this factor that led him to say at the end of his life: "If I had my life over again, I would devote much more time to the ministry of comfort and encouragement?" And may not his rare gift of diagnosing and prescribing for the maladies of the soul have been one result of that painful discipline? [pages 52-53]

11. Casting Out Disruptions

Another classic story is that of a meeting at which a drunk man persistently interrupted while Mr. Nicholson was speaking. At last the preacher could take no more, and he said to the man, "If you interrupt me again, I will come down and throw you out."

All went well for a while until he interrupted once again. Mr. Nicholson, a burly man, came down from the pulpit, ran the man out into the street and returned to the pulpit. Just as he was about to resume his message, a man rose in the audience and said:

"Mr. Nicholson, if the Lord had been here do you think He would have done that?"

"Of course He wouldn't," Was the rejoinder. "But then I am not the Lord Jesus. If He had been here, He would have cast the devil out and left the man here. I couldn't do that, so I cast them both out." [pages 55-56]

12. We Learn through Mistakes

It is often through our mistakes that we learn important lessons in the life of faith. [page 63]

13. Madame Chiang Kai-Shek, a Believer

A very important conference of the China Inter-Varsity Fellowship was convened in 1947 when, in spite of the great travel obstacles, 360 delegates from sixty-nine universities and colleges gathered in Nanking. Madam Chiang Kai-shek paid the conference a visit, and addressed them, "not as a high official, but as a fellow-Christian." [page 81]

14. Love and Compassion to the Chinese Blind

Next, on an eminence above us we saw a pathetic blue-clad band of singers who rendered *Like a river glorious* -- pupils of the Blind School founded and conducted by two Chinese young women. Priscilla Chu's younger sister had fallen into the fire and lost her sight. Close contact with the sorrows of this sightless child gave her elder sister

an intense desire to alleviate the lot of those in like case. A similar burden was laid on a gifted blind young woman who had been cared for and trained in the CIM Blind School in Kunming.

With only the support of the Kopu Tribal Church behind them, Priscilla and her colleague Susie Chang launched their school for the blind. When the blind children began to arrive in their new home, they were bewildered by the unaccustomed kindness and love with which they were surrounded. There must surely be a catch somewhere! One lad whom I heard speak said, "It was like coming to heaven." In such surroundings the gospel found ready acceptance.

Behind each of the students lay a tragic story. One of the older boys had been advised by some of his own people that as his prospects were so bleak, the best way out was for him to hang himself. The advice seemed sound to him, so taking a rope, he hanged himself from a tree. But the rope broke and he fell to the ground little worse for the experience. Shortly afterwards he heard of this Blind School, and now, as a Christian, he was singing in the choir. [pages 82-83]

15. In Christ All Nations Are One

In the far north-west of China, we visited a unique prison administered by an unusual man. Warden Meng was a man of culture and of independent means, seventy years of age and a most colorful personality. In his later years he saw the unique opportunities for Christian witness he could enjoy as warden of a gaol with a captive audience, and threw himself with characteristic zeal into the work.

After jolting for several hours over very rough roads in a jeep the mud wall and mud houses of Yungteng were indeed a welcome sight. On arriving at the prison, we were ushered into a large courtyard, where to my surprise, all the prisoners were sitting, around singing the songs of Zion. They were a motley group -Chinese, Tibetan, Mogolian, Moslem and Aboriginal. A number were in chains. The gaol itself was spotlessly clean.

Upon our entry, the prisoner rose respectfully as we were introduced. The warden then called on six men to rise --Moslems who had been converted and baptized on confession of their faith. I was invited to bring a gospel message, and a young Moslem and a Chinese man afterwards came forward in acceptance of Christ and knelt together, while the rest joined in communal prayer. As bitter hatred exists between Chinese and Moslem, the two kneeling figures were mute evidence of the reconciling grace of Christ.

Before we left the gaol, we were entertained to a sumptuous Chinese feast. It was only with the greatest difficulty that we restrained the generous warden from burdening our already fully loaded jeep with a live sheep! [page 86]

16. Gradual Sanctification

In the Papua New Guinean culture, women rank very low and their husbands often do not treat them well. Even after conversion, old habits sometimes persist. One day it came to our ears that John Mark had beaten his wife. It is true that their wives could be very provoking, but we could not allow this to pass unnoticed. On facing him with the wrong he had done, he was somewhat shamefaced, but, in order to impress us with the degree of his growth in grace, he said, "You know, I never kick her now!" I suppose he was experiencing what one could call very gradual sanctification. [page 108]

17. Rev. John Harper Witnessing Until His Death

By a curious coincidence, I preached in two churches one in Scotland and one in Canada, both of which had an interesting connection with the Rev. John Harper, a great Scottish preacher and soul-winner. When ministering at the Harper Memorial Church in Glasgow, I was surprised to discover that few of the present members were aware of the striking story of the man in whose memory the church had been built.

Mr. Harper had received a call in 1912 to the famous Moody Memorial Church in Chicago, and embarked on the supposedly unsinkable *S.S. Titanic* to take up his appointment.

When the Titanic struck the fatal iceberg, Harper was one of those flung into the icy waters. One resulting sequel to the tragedy was recounted by a young Scotsman at a gathering in the Philpot Tabernacle in Hamilton, Canada, where I recently conducted a series of meetings.

"Four years ago, when I left England on board the Titanic," he said, "I was a careless, godless sinner. I was in this condition on the night when the terrible catastrophe took place. Very soon, with hundreds more, I found myself struggling in the cold, dark waters of the Atlantic. I caught hold of something, and clung to it for dear life.

"The wail of awful distress from the perishing all around was ringing in my ears, when there floated nearby me a man who, too, seemed to be clinging to something. He called to me, "Is your soul saved?"

I replied, "No, it is not."

"Then," said he, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved."

"We drifted apart for a few minutes, then we seemed to be driven together once more.

"Is your soul saved?" he again cried. "I fear it is not," I replied.

"Then if you will only believe on the Lord Jesus Christ your soul will be saved," was his further message of intense appeal to me.

"But we were again separated by the rolling currents. I heard him call out this message to others as they sank beneath the waters. There and then, with two miles of water beneath me, in my desperation I called on Christ to save me. I believed on Him and I was saved.

"In a few minutes I heard this man of God say:" "I'm going down, I'm going down." Then, "No, no, I'm going up." That man was John Harper.

It was a genuine pleasure for me to be able to share with the Scottish audience this remarkable story of a former minister of that church and a great man of God. [pages 115-116]