

*Autobiography*

# BLIND KOREAN PASTOR



# An Yo Han

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CHRISTIAN LIFE PUBLISHERS

Autobiography – Blind Korean Pastor  
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ISBN 9971-991-19-5

Cover Design by Charles Seet

**CHRISTIAN LIFE PUBLISHERS**  
Tampines South P.O. Box 54  
Singapore 9152

## FOREWORD

Ever since I came to know the "Blind Korean Pastor" An Yohan through his film six years ago, a bond of friendship has developed between us because of Calvary.

Realising the power this film has over its audience to turn prodigal sons to Christ, I inquired to have it shown again in Singapore. By courtesy of the Embassy of the Republic of Korea we had the Blind Korean Pastor film screened 23 times between September and December 1988 to all Bible-Presbyterian Churches and to several other church groups. Over five thousand people were blessed. The feedback was tremendous. Backsliders have returned to the Lord, tears of repentance and consecration were shed by both sinners and saints.

By putting three Korean songs of the film into English and having them sung by Miss Roska Sihombing, graduate of Far Eastern Bible College and Life Church missionary to Batam, five hundred tapes have been made for the nurture of grateful hearts. Since then the film has been introduced to B-P Churches in Australia, to packed houses, with the same response.

Behind this film is Pastor An's autobiography which was published in Korea, 1981. This biography has now gone through fifty-four printings, making it the bestseller in the history of publication of books in Korea. Now that it is translated into English, should it not be put into print for the benefit of the English-speaking?

Having read the English version with the film at the back of my mind, I am all the more impressed by the Blind Korean Pastor's noble thoughts and insights in the spiritual world. This book shows the way to life everlasting in the Lord Jesus Christ and revives hope for the handicapped to live vibrantly through this world below.

If you, dear Reader, have been heavily battered by the storms of life, read on to the very end. You will become a different person!

In as much as the film has turned thousands to Christ, I have no doubt that the publication of this English version will touch the lives of people from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of Light. In this regard, I must express my deep appreciation to Deacon Paul Wong of the Christian Life Book Centre for undertaking the printing of this book.

*"O send out Thy light and Thy truth;  
- Let them lead me;  
Let them bring me unto Thy holly hill,  
And to Thy tabernacles." (Psalm 43:3)*

Timothy Tow  
Far Eastern Bible College, Singapore  
July, 1989

*"Who is blind but my servant?  
Or deaf, as my messenger that I sent?  
Who is blind as he that is perfect,  
And blind as the Lord's servant?"*  
Isaiah 42:19

*"Jesus answered, Neither had this man sinned,  
nor his parents: but that the works of God  
should be made manifest in him."*  
John 9:3

*"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground  
and die,  
It abideth alone: But if it die, it bringeth  
forth much fruit."*  
John 12:24

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## PREFACE

We have eyes that can see all things and their myriad colors; mental eyes that can think and evaluate; finally spiritual eyes that can feel and recognize the true way. I no longer despair of my blindness for I found the right purpose for my life. My dead spirit was made alive after I had been driven down into utter darkness. God, in his infinite wisdom, led me to the lowly places, took away my eyesight and everything I owned in order for me to see with spiritual eyes things that cannot be seen with our physical eyes. I was not able to fathom his unique plan for my life then.

I now pray, "Thank you Lord for my blindness. When this body leaves the earth my sight will be gone with it. With my new spiritual eyesight, I am ready to obey your will and glorify your name until the day you call me to heaven ..."

It is my wish that this story will help someone find God, to find hope in despair, to thank God for their seeing eyes, and to be saved from their negative attitude.

I would like to thank Mrs Sue Young Cho who translated and edited this book for me.

*John An*  
April 1987

## NOTES FROM THE TRANSLATOR

Ever since I began to realize God's leading hands on me, I wanted to serve him and obey him with all I had. Looking back, I was certain that it had been God's plan for me to translate this book for him.

After one of our church members told me the life story of a blind minister, Rev. An, he came to Toronto where we served the Messiah Korean Church and spoke at our church. He also brought the movie of his life which won the award equivalent to the Academy Award in the United States. There were no dry eyes in that congregation after the showing.

Then, Rev. An asked me if I would translate his book, which had been a best seller for a long time. Totally unprepared for such a request, I hesitated. But upon his persistence, and trusting that God would help me in this project, I accepted his request.

Since English is not my mother tongue, I needed someone who would refine the translation in order for it to be readable to the English speaking population. As I prayed about this matter, God led me to a very devout Christian friend, Mrs Dianne Nolson, who leads a neighbourhood prayer group. She was more than willing to help me.

I thank Mrs Nolson for her many hours of tedious work and also, my daughter, Sally, for her patient proof-reading.

Mrs Sue Young Cho  
1987



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born in 1939

Became blind at the age of 37

Graduated from Hankuk University of Foreign Studies  
(major in French)

Graduated from Hankuk Theological Seminary

Received M.A. degree in Graduate Division of Social and  
Development, Chung Ang University

Received Ph.D. degree in Golden State University

### **He heads the following organizations:**

New Light Church of the Blind

New Light Jr. and Sr. High Evening School

Samaria Evangelical Mission for Ladies married to Amer-  
ican soldiers

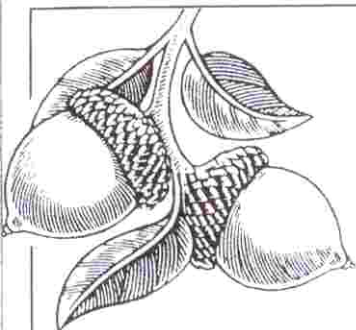
New Light Braille Magazine

New Light House for the Blind who do not have the  
means of support

### **Reverend An's address:**

The New Light Church of the Blind

858 - 39 Pangbae-1 dong, Kangnam-Ku, Seoul, 135  
Korea



## PART I

*The Lord is my Shepherd,  
I shall not want;  
He makes me lie down in green pastures.  
He leads me beside still waters;  
He restores my soul.*



## **HAPPY DAYS IN GREEN PASTURES**

### **I**

My father, Jin-Sam An, was an ever-present obstacle blocking the bright sunlight from shining towards me in my green pastures.

I was, a third child, born in October 1939. I was given the biblical name, John, while my seven brothers and sisters were given ordinary Korean names. To my father I was a special gift from God, a lamb to be dedicated to Him. My father had come to know Jesus late in life and out of a deeply penitent heart for his long, lost wandering years of sin, he was determined to make me a servant of the Lord. He dedicated my life, together with his, to God's complete control. In a way I was chosen as a ransom lamb, a sin offering. His prayer was not only to thank God for the safe delivery of a baby boy but for giving him a lamb fit to sacrifice. Therefore, I was destined to be a very special offering given to God.

Although the city of Soonchon in Pyongnam Province, where we lived, was an extremely active Christian town, Father had absolutely no interest in Christianity until the spring of the year I was born. His family had been deeply rooted in its strict traditions. Coming from a wealthy family and being a youth with a free spirit had made him obstinate and proud. Christian teachings concerning God as Creator, God as Father, original sin, the forgiveness of sin through the blood of Jesus Christ, heaven prepared for believers and the temporary nature of life here on earth, were laughing matters to him.

Then one day, God confronted him. By chance, it seemed, he was led to a revival meeting in a neighbouring town, and he returned from that meeting a changed man. He has not been the same since. I never had the courage to find out the details of his conversion, fearing that I

would not be able to face his overwhelming, mystical religious experience. The fact that father was filled with the Holy Spirit and immersed so deeply in Christianity at the time of my birth could only be seen as an inescapable reality.

From the time of my birth, father attached the disciple's name John to me as an anchor to hold me fast to his dream of making me a servant for God. Not only was I the center of his dream, but he took away all of the worldly privileges and pleasures to which I was entitled. He even donated most of his inheritance to the Pyongyang Theological Seminary, and became a student at the school himself. He moved the family there, relinquishing the responsibility of a father as the head of a family and as its provider. Instead of being the son of my earthly father, I was adopted by a God whom I had never met, and inherited poverty and suffering in place of security and comfort.

## II

Ever since the time of my birth, I considered father an obstruction blocking the sunlight shining towards me. Life is light. When a man is born, I felt, there is a light in him which cannot be quenched; a light with such power that nothing can thwart it for any length of time. I decided to remove the obstacle out of my way and thus began a long and hard struggle with my father.

At first, as a child, I was happy and had a good relationship with my father. I started talking when I was only a year old. I was mischievous, but was loved by everyone in the neighbourhood. Those happy memories of childhood have always given me warm feelings. My father bestowed on me, his special son, a great deal of attention. His love for me could not have been less than any other father to his son. Instead of complaining about my loud crying, he used to say, "He will be a good

singer—he has a loud voice.” Seeing me lead the neighbourhood children in play, he would say, “Look at his leadership. He will be a successful minister.” Father would not bother to attend the school activities of my brothers and sisters, but he remembered mine and never failed to escort me, holding my hand, and thus causing a great deal of jealousy in the family. My position is similar to that of Joseph and his brothers.

My dissatisfaction with Father started with his frequent moves from church to church and the poverty of the family. At the end of World War II in 1945, we moved from North Korea (which had become communist) to South Korea. Then the Korean Conflict in June 1950 forced us to move again. This time we moved further south where my father became an army chaplain.

After the armistice in 1953, Father got a job as chaplain in an army hospital in another town and I entered junior high school there. Father’s stay as a chaplain was very short and once again, we started to move from one small country church to another. The unstable economic conditions after the war affected everyone, and poverty hit ministers as a natural consequence. Father had even more difficulty finding a church, for he had three boys and five girls, which meant there were ten mouths to feed from a skimpy church treasury. The finance committee would ask, “How many children do you have?” and Father would mumble, “Three boys . . .” They they would ask, “How many girls?” and Father would say “Five!” which would end the conversation. Even after their promises of further contact, we would not hear from them again.

After a long search, Father was given the chance to serve a small country church but the meagre pay was hardly enough to feed the members of our family and cover school and other expenses. Mother had to be frugal to manage the household with this meager income. Our meals were mainly soup made with bean

sprouts and barley powder. However, the congregation would not admit their incompetency in providing for us; instead, they blamed our poor conditions on the mismanagement of finances on our part. So Mother always had a bowl of rice ready to be set on the table in case church members dropped in during mealtime, pretending that we could afford rice instead of just barley-bean sprout soup!

I began to rebel against the extremely lowly life-style of my preacher father, whom I considered a very poor provider. In other words, he lost the respect he should have received from his son. Later on, I moved to another town to enter high school. However, I had to come home for the weekends to spend the Sundays with the family. I was simply tired of being poor, and resented father's unconditional acceptance of an unfair God who allowed such poverty. How could father give up all of his wealth to the seminary, leaving nothing for us to survive on? How could he try to force us to believe his foolish notion that we should thank God for all circumstances? Ridiculous and stupid! The most aggravating fact was that my brothers and sisters quietly accepted our situation without resistance. It was different for me. I had to fight for my life, the life I was entitled to enjoy, so I defied his way of living. With all my might I battled his persistent prayers for me. His never-changing hope for me to be a preacher was beyond my understanding. The more I thought about it, the more I rebelled. I thought, "You can thank your God! I am not going to thank Him for his poverty and humiliation. You can be a preacher! Isn't it enough for you to suffer personally? Don't you try to force it upon me!"

I was determined to remove this obstacle which shut off the light. I openly resisted my father and his church with every scheme I could think of, though sometimes such schemes were very crude. The results were quite satisfying at times.

Once, on a large piece of paper, I wrote, "There is no God! (Gospel of John An 1:1)" and put it on the front door of the church where the congregation could not miss it. The people just talked and gossiped about it among themselves, not making it a big issue, but at home it was a serious matter. Father, shocked by my behaviour, spent all night in the church in prayer, and Mother would not let me sleep a wink all through the night, trying to force me to repent while she cried and pleaded. All this talk and worry were not enough to thwart my rebellion towards my father.

The following Sunday, I put up the second verse to my "Gospel of John An" which read, "Don't believe in Jesus Christ—believe in your grandfather." I continually added more verses. Even such behaviour was not enough to satisfy my rebellion. I used to stand in ambush to startle the church members with a water gun filled with ink. I ruined their Sunday clothes for the sheer joy of vengeance for their mistreatment of their minister and his family.

My parents resumed their prayers for me but I was too stubborn to be coaxed into non-resistance. My father might have been comforted and calmed by his prayers, but my mother prayed with tears, imploring God to punish her in my place. It became a mother's ardent prayer for her wayward son.

The condemning remarks against me among the church members came into the open. In prayer during worship services, they said, "Our Father in heaven, forgive those children who do not know Thee and are possessed with evil spirits. We are ashamed of our preacher's son who has fallen out of your grace, while he should be an example for others." They not only criticized my misdemeanors, but also my father's inability to raise a proper Christian boy. I was well aware of the accusation laid upon him, but became even worse in my dire struggle against the injustice and poverty inflicted on

our family. I was much satisfied with the commotion I caused the whole congregation. Fortunately, I was a problem only on Sundays because I had to go away to school during the week. My mother could not wait for me to go back to school so I would leave them alone in peace.

The troublesome and mischievous "preacher's kid" at home transformed into a bright, vivacious and exemplary student at school. This was one proof of my victory against Father. The school was where I belonged and where I could make my dreams come true. I, a lamb given by my father to God as a sacrificial offering, enjoyed the comparative pleasures of school, away from the church and my home. Contrary to the dreary and listless world of my father, I lived in a world of bright sun, with brilliant colors. I claimed my right to live like a normal human being, and simply shut my ears to the earnest pleas of my parents. I could not have cared less about how the church members degraded me. Whenever I came home on weekends or summer vacations, I would never fail to devise new mischief to aggravate them. The warfare persisted with no end in sight, but my father's prayers could not be stopped. All the troubles I inflicted upon him were of no avail in affecting his prayer life even a little.

### III

One summer day when I was home for vacation, Father seemed as if he did not pay attention to me anymore. I was alone in my room idly wasting the afternoon when I heard a commotion in front of our house. I hurried outside to find my father being scolded severely by a peddler.

"How could you raise a dog to bite people? Did you train him that way? Is it right for the minister's dog to



