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6. THE DEATH AND DIVINITY OF CHRIST WHICH ARE AT THE CENTRE OF THE GOSPEL ARE IMPLICIT IN EVANGELISM

Jesus' divinity and the necessity of his death for the salvation of men are among the truths which are at the heart of the gospel. But they are also truths which are no easier for today's Muslims to accept than they once were for Jesus' own disciples.

It is surprising to see that Jesus started to speak to his disciples about his death only quite late, when they had already discovered that he really was the Messiah (cf. [Mt. 16:13-23](#)). In spite of their discovery, or because of it, his disciples struggled greatly with this idea. Jesus returned to this subject only twice, and his disciples still had the same difficulty imagining that their master could be nailed to a cross.

In the same way, Jesus' disciples probably didn't have a very precise idea about his divinity. The title 'Son of God' that they used for him on several occasions was a messianic title and it quite possibly had no other significance for them. Moreover Jesus was as discreet about his divinity as about his being the Messiah.

However, Jesus acted and spoke in a way that made his contemporaries think. Neither Moses nor Abraham [p. 181](#) dared to do as Jesus did. This roundabout fashion of revealing who he was shows Jesus' humility, but it also demonstrates his teaching methods, since he didn't want a head-on confrontation with the passionate monotheism of his fellow Jews. Even his enemies managed to understand that Jesus implicitly claimed divine status, which motivated the sentence they passed against him.

7. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST TESTIFIES TO HIS DIVINITY AND TO HIS SUPERIORITY OVER ALL THE PROPHETS

With the crucifixion of Jesus, all the hopes and dreams of his disciples collapse in ruins. They are in complete confusion until they discover that, contrary to all expectations, his tomb is empty. Their encounter with the risen Christ fills them with joy but, more especially, it gives them a new understanding of the Scriptures. Thus, the reality of the living Christ on one hand and the testimony of the Scriptures on the other combine to reveal the mystery of Christ to the disciples. From now on, and especially from the day of Pentecost onwards, all the events of Jesus' life, as well as his death, make sense in the light of this event, unprecedented in history: his resurrection. He is the promised Messiah who fulfils the hope of Israel, and the eternal Only Son sent by God to bring man back from death to life.

Dr Chawkat Georges Moucarry of Iraq teaches at All Nations Christian College, Easneye, Ware, England. [p. 182](#)

How a Maulvi Found Peace

K.M. Usman

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It has been my privilege to know and work with K.M. Usman. He belonged to the Malkana agricultural community who live in villages around Agra and towards Delhi. They number more than 1 million people. They were originally Hindu Rajputs of the warrior community that converted to Islam during the Moghul period, some under political pressure and others through the witness of the Sufi saints. Many others were forced out of Hinduism by the Brahmins who feared their collaboration with the Muslim rulers. Because their religion was a mixture of Hinduism and Islam they were neglected by the orthodox leaders of both communities.

In the 1920s the fundamentalist Hindu Arya Samaj claimed to have converted 100,000 Malkanas back to the Hindu fold, but indifference and negligence soon alienated them further from both communities. K.M. Usman's story is the report of his interview with Power for Living in 1973 at the Haggai Institute for Advanced Leadership Training held in Singapore.

As noted, Usman studied Islam and Arabic from the age of 7. In 1939 he graduated from the Muslim University of Aligarh. He was the first graduate and first Maulvi from his community. After his conversion to Christ in 1950 he immediately began witnessing among his own community and within two years more than 50 people had accepted Christ and were baptized. During the early 1960s Usman saw another 100 Malkanas come to Christ and be baptized. Then opposition increased and even the local church, through fear, attacked him. Various groups have sought to take up the work among this community but with little success. It seems that the moment of Christ's 'kairos' for this large community was lost—a story too often repeated in the Muslim world. We bow in shame and confess our sin of omission.

The Editor

At Agra, India, stands the world famous Taj Mahal, one of the seven wonders of the world. It was built by the fifth emperor of the Moghul dynasty as a tomb and a memorial for his wife, who died giving birth to her 14th child.

Agra is also the place of my birth—and my rebirth. The former event is unimportant, but the heavenly host rejoiced at the second. My [p. 183](#) Master affirms this in [Luke 15:7](#). That I should meet him in Agra, India has to be a miracle.

I was born to exceptionally devout Muslim parents in a community of a million Malkana residents. Malkanas mostly practise a mixture of Hinduism and Islam. They have some outward traditions of both religions but few convictions of either.

My father was concerned about the religious, educational, and social uplift of his community; and it looked to him for guidance. He decided that I should become a Muslim priest—a maulvi. So, from the ages of 7 to 17, I studied Islam and its theology along with my secular subjects.

Eventually, I became the first university graduate and the first maulvi of our community. Yet the more I studied Islam and the Koran, the more I became confused, frustrated and restless.

One verse in the Koran says, 'Cursed be of Allah those who tell lies.' I was conscious that I had told lies. I was very much afraid that God was going to condemn me, and that no power on earth would be able to save me from God's wrath. I would find myself in the blazing fire of hell with furious snakes and poisonous scorpions clinging to me and biting my body.

Another terror was that two angels were sitting on my shoulders constantly writing down all my good and evil deeds. I knew that the angel on my left shoulder would reach

Allah right after my death with the record of my evil deeds. Even if my evil deeds should be as small as a particle of sand, Allah would still send me to hell.

I felt that I was already living in hell, and there was no way out. There is no grace and no forgiveness of sins in Islam. Since Allah is the great and just judge, he will weigh the good and evil deeds, and the guilty one will have to suffer accordingly. It was such a horrifying scene for me that I lived in constant fear.

Nevertheless, I became the head of the Islamia School and the Muslim priest at Firozabad, a city near Agra. I married and had a family.

Once, in purchasing books for the school library, I picked up a secondhand Bible. Out of curiosity I started reading it, but soon put it aside, thinking it was very much like the Koran.

A week later, however, I began to read Matthew's gospel. My attention was gripped by the words of Jesus, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest' ([Mt. 11:28](#)). Jesus, one of the four major prophets of God according to Islam, was calling me. No man on earth could save me from the fire of hell, but here was a chosen Messenger of God offering me the rest of soul which I needed so badly.

He further said to me. 'Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God.'

'Yes I do, my Lord,'

'Believe also in me' ([Jn. 14:1](#)).

'Yes, I will,' was my response to him. I was so much overpowered that I forgot I was reading a Book. I felt someone was speaking to me, saying, 'Usman, do you need peace?'

'Yes, my Lord and my God.'

'Now, peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you' ([Jn. 14:27](#)). p. 184 O, the peace of God's chosen Prophet! What a wonderful gift, and a free gift to me, and that peace was what I needed most!

I became free from all my fears, horrors, and restlessness. I became a new person— with no fear of hell and no fear of any recording angel.

But what was I to think of Islam, my lifelong faith? Muhammad, the founder of Islam many centuries previously, had angrily denounced a couple who opposed him. He had prayed in these words, recorded in the Koran:

'Perished be the two hands of Abu Lahab, and he will perish. His wealth and what he has earned shall avail him not. Soon shall he enter into the blazing fire, and his wife too, who goes about slandering. Around her neck shall be a halter of twisted palm fibre.'

With this I compared the agony and suffering of Jesus Christ while hanging on the cross. The crown of thorns was thrust on his head, the nails were put through his hands and feet, and scorners spat in his face. His enemies inflicted the severest possible pain and suffering on him. Yet Jesus prayed in these words: 'Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.'

What a great contrast in these two prayers! I realized it revealed a great contrast in the two personalities. Muhammad's prayer was merely a human reaction, while Jesus' prayer was a divine reaction. It seemed to me impossible for a human being to pray as Jesus Christ did under such agonizing conditions. He must have been God!

I decided to leave my work in order to live a solitary religious life as a Christian ascetic. I made the necessary arrangements for my farm and asked my wife to use its income for her own and the family's needs. I would live alone in a small thatched hut about a mile away.

However, the Rev Donald E. Rugh, a missionary from America, convinced me that a Christian should live with others in the fellowship of the church. He promised to give me Christian teaching. I have since had theological training and been ordained into the ministry.

The head of the institution from which I had passed my high school examination, a staunch Muslim, came to see me after my conversion. 'I know why you have become a Christian,' he told me. 'As a Muslim you had to pray five times a day. Now you spend just an hour a week in the church.'

'But at that time I felt off-duty from God after I'd prayed five times a day,' I answered. 'A Christian is never off-duty from God; he is under his appointment and living in his fellowship all the 24 hours.'

He asked me, 'Have you ever seen God?'

My reply was, that, in fact, I was not at all interested in seeing God's hands, his face, or even his whole body. I had seen his open and bleeding heart, full of love and compassion for me; and that was enough.

My wife, who had been a faithful, quiet, gentle companion, was reluctant to accept Christ and be baptized. I continued to pray and present Christ to her as best I knew how, however.

Sometime later, my wife fell from the roof and broke her back. She [p. 185](#) became very weak, and when X-rayed, was found to have tuberculosis. This was a great shock to me, for tuberculosis was considered incurable at that time.

Each day I rode my bicycle eight miles to visit her in the hospital, taking one of our five children with me. On one visit I put my hands on her chest and began to talk to my Master in a very informal way.

'Why has this calamity fallen upon our family?' I asked him. 'Please speak to me so clearly that I will be able to understand.'

After a pause I continued, 'Yes, I can live without my wife, but what about our five small children? What would they do without their mother? But if you think they will be alright, please tell me now, so I may be free from my anxiety and live in peace.'

I do not know how long I continued in prayer. My wife finally suggested that I go home before it got dark.

The next day the doctor attending my wife took another X-ray of her chest. He examined it carefully, then, one after another, he took five X-rays and consulted his colleagues.

Finally, he came to me, exclaiming, 'Good news! Your wife has been healed. She is perfectly alright.'

After coming home from the hospital, my wife told, 'Since God has given me a new birth, we ought to consecrate the rest of our lives to his service.' She confessed Jesus Christ as personal Saviour and Lord and was baptized.

The people of my village still had great respect for me, fortunately, so I could speak with them. I was sharing my Christian experience with a group of about 50 people one day when we heard a deafening noise—the crying of women and the clash of bamboo sticks.

A fierce fight had erupted between two rival factions in the village. Some of the combatants were using long iron-tipped sticks, and others were using spears. So many people were getting badly injured that I ran between the two groups to stop the fighting.

A stick struck my nose. It began to bleed furiously, and my white clothes turned red with blood. In horror the rivals stopped their fighting and ran to help me. The leaders of both groups went to get a doctor. Later they took me to a hospital for treatment.

The two groups reconciled their differences and have since been living in harmony. Now the whole village is at peace.

What a lesson that was for me! If a few drops of blood from a sinful man can pacify a few thousand, how much more can the blood of Jesus Christ, who knew no sin, be effective for the whole world. [p. 186](#)